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# BALLYBLUNDER.

# BALLYBLUNDER:

## An Irish Story.

[illegible]

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# BALLYBLUNDER.

## CHAPTER I.

### A STORMY COAST AND STORMY PEOPLE.

ALONG the north-east coast of Ireland are rugged rocks and lofty cliffs;—the scenery is wild and savage, and the winds howl as they sweep over the bleak moor and the marshy swamp, or around the lofty summits of the neighbouring mountains; and the raging waves rear up their foaming crests against the opposing cliffs, and dash themselves against the iron-bound coast which has, for ages, resisted the fury of the waters in stern, calm defiance, of their impotent wrath.

* *

But more rugged than the rocks—more lofty than the cliffs—is the heart of man in its violence and pride; more dreary and more desolate are the uncultivated wastes of his mind, than the swamps and bogs of a wilderness; and fiercer far than the howling winds, or the raging waves in their utmost fury, are the blasts of passion which sweep over his soul.

* * * * *

* * * * *

In the midst of scenery such as I have described, there stood a small neat white-washed house, flanked on one side by a large stack of first-rate peat, and on the other by several smaller stacks of inferior hay. Although surrounded by bog and moor, many acres had been reclaimed and brought under cultivation. Potatoes, turnips, oats, barley, and even wheat might in their season have been seen flourishing amidst the barren waste.

In a small room in that neat white-washed house, sat two people conversing and sipping whiskey-punch; the elder was a sleek-looking man of some fifty years, the characteristic expression of whose face was cunning. You could not talk to him for five minutes on any subject without feeling an inward conviction that he was deceiving you: insincerity was stamped on his countenance by nature, and had been indelibly fixed there by art. He was an indefatigable and unscrupulous labourer in the Roman Catholic Church. '*Verbum sat.*' His companion was a much younger man, of a stout body and a stolid countenance—a burly priest with a coarse animal face, innocent even of the most remote approach to intellect. If he had not the interests of his church at heart so strongly as had Father Maguire, he was, at least, duly impressed with the importance of his own, which he kept steadily in view under all circumstances. This idiosyncrasy of Father Hogan's was well known to Father Maguire, and by that astute gentleman turned to account.

* * * *

'You see, Father Hogan,' said his brother-priest, in allusion to something that had passed before, 'this state of things won't do. I am not a mercenary man—my worst enemy can't accuse me of that—but right is right; 'the labourer is worthy of his hire,' and so is the priest, I hope; but do we get our dues? I say we do not; and whose fault is it I should like to know?'

'Mr. Kindly's, to be sure—I always said so, Father Maguire—you may remember that I did.'

'You did, Hogan. I'll do you the justice to say you always saw through that man and his pretended charities.'

'Charities!' repeated Father Hogan contemptuously. 'It's one word for the boys, and two for himself.'

'Which the boys are beginning to understand, Hogan, ain't they?'

'Faith! it's not my fault if they don't, for I've been dinging it into their ears for the last ten years.'

'And I for twenty, and more than that. Ay, it's two-and-twenty years since that man, Kindly, bought the property and built the house yonder. He has been a thorn in my side ever since.'

'He is taking the bread out of our mouths. Sure the boys can't pay him the increase of rent and us our dues!' said Father Hogan, stirring the sugar in a fresh glass of punch, virtuously indignant at the thought of the straits to which the interloper, Kindly, had brought him.

'I told him, when first he came here, that his plan of civilizing the people would not answer,' observed Father Maguire, looking slily at his friend.

Their eyes met. Father Hogan laughed. Even he could understand that look.

'To be sure, Father Maguire! And who so likely to know whether it would answer as your reverence. It's a pity he did not believe you. It would have saved him and us a sight of trouble. But may be it won't be long before he goes now.'

'On account of this sheep-killing, do you mean?'

'To be sure I do: what else? Serve him right if the boys had cut his throat as well as the sheep's, the meddling, interloping spalpeen! He has the county upside down with his educating, building, and cultivating fancies. I've no patience with the man! with his soft voice and his slippery ways!'

Father Hogan had worked himself into a passion, as he always did when he thought of how many half-crowns went into Mr. Kindly's pockets, and how few into his own.

'It's astonishing, Hogan, how soon that fellow wormed himself into their affections. The very first time I talked to the people about all these innovations, and advised resistance to them, since they only tended to his advantage and not at all to theirs, I was met, to my astonishment, with exclamations of gratitude for his kindness; and 'they wouldn't like to anger the master;' but they don't talk so now, I fancy.'

'Of course not, they have lived to find out the truth of what your reverence told them. Kindness, indeed! phew! it's all to serve himself—all to put money into his own pocket, and to take it out of ours, he does it.'

'The people did not want the things he forced upon them, and so I told him, Hogan. They were satisfied and contented. Their cabins were good enough for them and so was their food; and as for education, they are better without it: it only makes them discontented with their lot in life. 'A little learning is a dangerous thing, Hogan.''

'It is, sir,' said Hogan, who, never having achieved any learning himself, most cordially agreed with that proposition.

'I didn't tell you, sir,' he said, after a pause of some minutes, 'that I met Donovan this morning on my way here.'

'Well, and what then?'

'Oh, nothing particular; only we were talking about the sheep-killing; and he said he was afraid there would be more of it yet.'

'And he's a likely man to know, isn't he, Hogan?'

'He is, sir.' And again their eyes met, and a knowing smile distorted the disagreeable features of Father Hogan.

'They must take care of themselves. It is very wrong to destroy the property of others, you know, Hogan; and if they are caught, they will, of course, be severely punished.'

'Oh, they won't be caught, sir! Devil a fear! And as for its being wrong, I don't think so, and you don't either, Father Maguire.'

'Well, it was very aggravating putting those sheep there, I must say—English sheep eating up Irish food. But it is the old story; it doesn't matter whether it is sheep or people, the Saxons are ever and always grinding us to the earth, and eating us out of house and home.'

'If I had my wish,' exclaimed Father Hogan in an angry tone, 'the devil a Saxon, whether man or sheep, should pollute the soil of old Ireland for another day: they're the curse of the country. Blast them, root and branch! spawn of the devil! so they are!'

'Hush! gently, Father Hogan. You are getting excited. You have mentioned his Satanic majesty twice in that last speech; and, if I mistake not, once previously. You must do penance, Father Hogan.'

'My zeal has carried me too far. I acknowledge my fault. What penance must I perform, Father Maguire?'

'You must drink a tumbler of hot water without any whiskey in it, Father Hogan.'

Father Hogan made a wry face. 'I shall be sick if I do; can't you think of any other penance equally efficacious, your reverence?'

'Yes, I think I can. If water disagrees with your stomach, it would be wrong to force it on you; I therefore order you a wine-glass of whiskey without any water. You may drink it hot or cold, I'll leave you that choice any way.'

Father Hogan, having performed his penance with religious exactness, was about to resume his discourse against the offending Saxons, when a knock was heard at the door, and on the threshold appeared a man whose importance will not permit of his being smuggled into the end of a chapter.

# CHAPTER II.

## CATHOLIC CONVERSATION.

JAMES DONOVAN was a stout, thick-set, beetle-browed man, of about forty years. He was dressed in the everlasting grey frieze coat, reaching nearly to his heels, that the Irish peasantry wear in all weathers and in all seasons,—in winter to keep out the cold, in summer to keep off the sun.

Donovan's countenance, speech, and manner, were of Protean cast—all changing complexion according to the company they were in. As Donovan stood there in the priest's parlour, with his hat in his hand, and 'God save your riverences' on his tongue, you would not believe him to be the same man who, ten minutes before, struck one of his labourers over the head with a pitch-fork, and cursed him for 'a sneakin', snivellin' young gomeril,' because he overheard him talking of the sheep-killing in terms of censure, and of Mr. Kindly in terms of praise.

Donovan held a small farm belonging to Mr. Kindly, and held it under most advantageous circumstances to himself. Moreover both he and his family were under great obligations to Mr. and Mrs. Kindly and their daughters for many acts of liberality and goodness, especially during his wife's late illness, when medicine, attendance, and wine had been sent from Ballyblunder with an unsparing hand. No wonder, therefore, that Donovan had always a soft word and a grateful smile for any member of the Ballyblunder family, and an especially obsequious bow and complimentary address for the master whenever they met.

* * * *

* * * *

'God save your riverences;' and so saying, Donovan pulled a lock of his black hair but advanced not a step from where he stood.

'Good day, Donovan. Shut the door and take a chair,' said Father Maguire.

'Thank your riverence kindly; but shure I'll dirt the carpet; me feet are all covered wid mud, bad look to them! I'll do well enough, your riverence; but shure I'll close the door itself, anny way.'

'Nonsense Donovan, sit down man alive; don't mind the carpet, and sure the carpet won't mind you. Take a glass of whiskey, Donovan?'

'Not a dhrop, sirr! thankin' your honour all the—— Ah! now, Father Hogan, it's yourself has the winnin' ways wid ye. Here's your health, gintlemen. Faith! that's the right sort—never ped the Queen a penny—

I 'd kiss the book on it; and who has a better right to the rale stuff than your honours' riverences?'

These compliments having passed, Father Maguire, rightly supposing that Donovan had not called for the sake of the whiskey alone, undeniably good though it was, proceeded to ascertain the nature of his errand. This he speedily effected, for Donovan had come ready primed and heavily loaded, and only required a very slight concussion to cause him to explode.

'Well, Donovan, and what 's the news to-day? No more unlawful doings on the mountains I hope.'

'Shure, sirr, if there 's not much law on the mountains, there 's plenty on the plains.'

'Ah! how so, Donovan?'

'Faith, your riverence, the army is comin' to keep the pace I 'm tould.'

'The soldiers coming?'

'So I 'm tould, sirr. Mr. Kindly has sint off to Dublin Castle for the so'gers; but may be they won't sind 'em, your riverence.'

Donovan looked up into Father Maguire's face, while a peculiar smile passed across his own.

'And why won't they send the soldiers, Donovan?'

'Your riverence will privint 'em, sirr.'

'I prevent them? How can I do that, Donovan?'

'Ah! shure you 'll spake to the right riverent Father, sirr, and he 'll privint it.'

'The Bishop?'

'Yes, your honour; the holy and pious Docthor M'Meddle. Shure he 'll write to the Castle 'an tell 'em they needn't bother themselves to sind anny so'gers down here. We 're as paceable a set o' boys as there is in the three kingdoms.'

'The Bishop may have the will, but I 'm afraid he hasn't the power, Donovan, to do as you say.'

'Faith! he has so—beggin' your honour's pardon for makin' so free.'

'Are you sure of what you say about this letter to the Castle?'

'Is it shure, your riverence?—faith I read it.'

'Read it? How could you read it?'

'The post-misthress is my wife's sisther, sirr, an' a good Catholic,' said Donovan composedly.

Father Maguire shook his head.

'That was wrong, Donovan,—it was very wrong to open that letter. I shall speak to Biddy Lynch about it.'

'Faith, Father Maguire, 't was yourself tould me to open the letter.'

'I told you? You 're dreaming man!'

'Divil a dhrame at all! Shure 't was last Sabbath mornin'—no less; an' siz you—'What is wrong in itself is not wrong if joined to a good purpose—the end justifies the manes,' siz you. An' so I opened the letter, for I had heard a whisper of what was in it, an' I must know for certain. We don't want the army down amongst us ating us out of our homes; an' your riverence, wid the holy Docthor M'Meddle, will countherorder the so'gers; an' so the end was a good one, your riverence, an' justified the manes, sirr!'

'He 's right,' burst in Father Hogan, 'quite right;

and I hope Father Maguire, you *will* speak to the Bishop. If any one can stop this threatened persecution, he can.'

'Well, well! the thing is done and it can't be undone. Your zeal carried you too far, Donovan; if you are caught opening letters, you will be severely punished; do you know that?'

'I won't be caught, sirr.'

'I hope not. And what has made Mr. Kindly have recourse to so severe a measure as sending for troops?'

'I dunna, your honour. There wor fifty more sheep killed last night on Slaughmacuish.'

'Hem: the boys will be getting themselves into a scrape.'

'Divil a fear, sirr! an' your riverence will spake to the Bishop?'

'Why, yes, Donovan; I think it right that the holy father should be informed of these things.'

'Thank your honour's riverence; an' shure it's meself an' the boys has cause to be thankful, sirr, for all the care your riverence takes of the likes of us.'

'It's our duty, Donovan, to look after our flock—a duty that neither Father Hogan nor I, will, I trust, ever shrink from.'

'Especially when that duty consists in protecting you from the tyranny of interloping raparees, Donovan,' said Father Hogan with warmth.

'Small doubt of it, Father Hogan; shure yourself is the boy to tache them same raparees manners, sirr; an' small blame to yees, askin' your pardon for making so bould, your riverence.'

'No offence, Donovan. And as for these soldiers, we'll send them back with a flea in their ear, my word for it.'

'Then I'll be after wishing your honours' riverences good day, an' many of them;' and with an humble obeisance James Donovan withdrew.

* * * *
* * * *

Father Maguire lost no time in informing Dr. M'Meddle, the Roman Catholic bishop of the diocese, of the projected invasion of Saxon soldiery into the peaceful county of * * *.

Father Maguire, moreover, assured the Bishop that the presence of the soldiers was uncalled for and would but irritate the people, who were already in a state of great excitement, owing to some very unpopular (and he could not help saying unjust) proceedings on the part of Mr. Kindly, he having brought in a parcel of English farmers to the exclusion of the native tenants of the soil. He, Mr. Kindly, had let a large tract of mountain land to some Northumberland graziers, who had sent over numerous flocks of sheep; the boys were naturally enough much aggrieved by this act of Mr. Kindly's. It was 'taking the very bread out of their mouths,' as they themselves said, 'and giving it to strangers.' It was not to be wondered at that they resented this proceeding, and if Mr. Kindly got ill-will by it he had no one but himself to blame. He

(Father Maguire) was told that several of the English sheep had been found dead upon the mountains and on the adjacent lands; and a report had been spread by Mr. Kindly that they had been destroyed purposely by the people, which report he (Father Maguire) did not credit, although he must say, that, considering the provocation the poor people had received, and the fact of the sheep having strayed upon their land and doing much damage, he could scarcely blame them, if, in their ignorance, they had perhaps tumbled a sheep or two into a ditch. However, he did not believe the report. It was well known that the mountains, especially Slaughmacuish, were full of foxes; and he had no doubt of their being the real depredators. But Mr. Kindly had made their destruction an excuse for applying to Dublin Castle for the military to protect his property. Now he (Father Maguire) maintained that neither Mr. Kindly's property, nor the property of any one in the county, required protection.

When first Mr. Kindly came to Ballyblunder, he found the people happy, peaceful, and contented; and now what were they? He (Father Maguire) was sorry to say, the very reverse of what they had been before Mr. Kindly's appearance amongst them. Ill blood had arisen, constant bickerings took place, and general discontent was manifested throughout the parish.

Now he had no hesitation in affirming that this lamentable change in the minds and dispositions of the people was entirely owing to Mr. Kindly's misjudged, but doubtless well-meant, proceedings. He was a man full of new-fangled notions—notions picked up in England, and which might suit the English, but did not suit the boys of Ballyblunder; nevertheless, Mr. Kindly had insisted and persisted in forcing these notions down their throats. He had interfered with their ancient rights, outraged their feelings, changed their habits, ridiculed their customs, and, though last not least, had, he was grieved to say, in several instances set the people against their priest, thereby endeavouring to undermine the authority of the one party, and weaken the obedience of the other.

Surely the building of a school-house, the whitewashing of a few cottages, the cultivating of a few extra acres, and the like so-called improvements, were but a poor set-off against the evils which had arisen under well-meaning Mr. Kindly's mistaken rule.

He (Father Maguire) had brought these things to the Bishop's notice before. He had warned his reverence that seed was being sown which, if not rooted out, would be a source of trouble and danger in time to come—that tares were sown with the wheat. The time of trouble had arrived; the evil seed had increased and multiplied—had grown, bloomed, blossomed, and borne fruit:—an enemy had crept in, bit by bit, little by little, between the people and their priest:—a blow was aimed at their holy religion—the faith of the people was shaken—the authority of the priests was undermined!

He would say no more. He would leave the case as it was, without a comment—without a suggestion, in the hands of his right reverend superior, who, he was persuaded, would deal with the matter with his accustomed energy and decision.

◆

# CHAPTER III.

## THE BALLYBLUNDER FAMILY.

'WELL, the letter is gone, and now it remains to be proved whether they will attend to it or no,' said Mr. Kindly looking harassed and annoyed.

'They will surely attend to it; they cannot allow these outrages to continue and take no notice of them,' replied his wife.

'I don't know indeed, it's hard to say what they will or will not do. If the priests get wind of my letter, there will be such an outcry raised through the country about my tyranny and oppression, that the Executive won't dare to do much, if anything.'

'I have no patience with the priests,' exclaimed Mrs. Kindly, a warm-hearted, impetuous lady, 'they set the people against you; I am certain they do. I believe, if the truth were known, they are the instigators of this horrid, cruel sheep-killing.'

Mr. Kindly smiled, and patted his wife's cheek. He was a remarkably mild, gentle-mannered man.

'I can't help it, William, it's enough to make any one lose patience and temper too.'

'It is indeed, my love, very trying to both, but it is better not to lose either, if possible.'

'I can't help it, and I wonder how you can. The narrow-minded bigotry of these priests!—the way in which they have resisted every improvement, every attempt to educate and civilize the people, from the very first moment you tried to do anything for them; and now the ingratitude of the people themselves! I declare I am so provoked and annoyed when I think of all you have done, and the return they have made you, that I have neither patience, nor pity, nor anything else left for anybody.'

'I don't blame the poor people half as much as I do the priests. They . . .'

'No, not half so much,' interrupted Mrs. Kindly; 'but I do blame them very much indeed. After all, it is ridiculous to suppose that they don't know it is wrong to kill the sheep; Irishmen are no fools, whatever else they may be; they cannot, and do not, think it right to destroy other people's property.'

'It's hard to say, Mary; it is indeed. You are aware of the power that the Roman Catholic priest has over the minds of his flock; whatever he tells them is right, they implicitly believe. The denunciations of the priest have led to far worse results than the killing of sheep before now.'

'I know they have; and more shame to both priest and peasant that it is so.'

'Ay indeed! But what can you expect from the disciples of a master who gives them as a rule of conduct so pernicious and erroneous a doctrine as 'the end justifies the means?' The consequences, the fearful, fatal consequences of this wicked mandate must be apparent to every one. Satisfy your conscience that the end at which you aim is good, and you have '*carte blanche*' as to the means by which to attain that end. Such a doctrine opens the door to every species and every degree of wickedness; there is no reservation, no limit with regard to the means that may be employed. Only persuade one of these poor ignorant, uneducated people that it is 'for the glory of God,' and he will stop at nothing! He will lie, cheat, rob—ay, and murder—for 'the good cause.' This is no theoretical fancy on my part; it is not the prejudiced opinion of a Protestant, hostile to the Roman Catholic religion; I wish it were, I wish this dreadful accusation rested on my bare assertion alone, and were capable of contradiction; but so far from this being the case, it is patent to the whole country—nay, to the whole of Europe—that denunciations of particular persons by the priests have been followed by the murder of those denounced.'

'Horrible! I cannot think, William, how you, knowing all this, could come and settle down in this wild part of the country!'

'Because I am an Irishman, love, and wished to be of service to my neglected fellow-countrymen.'

'Well, your motives were good, and kind, and

Christianlike, and at one time I thought you would succeed, but now, I declare I am fit to cry when I think . . . Well Kate, where is Baby?'

'In the garden, mama, she is coming in directly; she is only just tying up some roses which the rabbits . . . Oh, papa! the rabbits have got into our garden again, and eaten up such loads of things; one of Baby's roses is quite spoilt; and my beautiful clove carnation is pulled to pieces!'

'I am very sorry, my love; but how could they get in? That new rabbit-fence was warranted to keep out such gentlemen.'

'There is a hole in the wire, papa—a large hole, Monk made it yesterday afternoon.'

'Ah, Mouk has no business on the garden side of the house, Miss Kate. If you let him come there, you must take the consequences. But why did you not get the damage repaired?'

'It was too late; Baby and I did what we could, we stuffed up the hole with bushes, and put great stones on them; but the horrid rabbits came in all the same.'

'Well, I am very sorry for your flowers, but, as I said before, you should not have that dog in the garden.'

'Call Baby, it is just tea time,' said Mrs. Kindly.

'Oh, mama! it is so lovely out! we hate coming in; mayn't we have tea on the lawn?'

'No, love. You have got a little cold, Kate, and there is a heavy dew most likely, and you are so hot.

You had much better come and have your tea in the house, like Christians. You can go out again afterwards, if you like.'

'Now, I think they had better stay out, as they are out, Mary; they will be more likely to catch cold after being in this warm room. Besides, I don't think there *is* a very heavy dew to-night, is there Kate?'

'Oh no, papa; at least, I don't know; I never thought of looking,' replied the truth-loving Kate

'Ah! well, I see that papa means to spoil you girls as usual; so go along, if you catch colds, he may nurse you, I won't.'

'Thank you, dearest mama. We won't catch colds,' said Kate, kissing her mother, and vanishing through the window by which she had entered from the lawn.

A thorough Irish girl was Kate Kindly. Her laughing grey eyes, black hair, and rich brunette complexion, were all Irish; so was her elastic step, so were her buoyant spirits, and so, alas! were her carelessness and want of method.

A sad thoughtless, handsome hoiden, was Kate Kindly. Eighteen summers had well nigh passed over her head; and still she ran wild in her garden, clothed in cotton, and 'thatched with straw,' as her brother Archie said.

Kate was not a fashionable young lady; in fact, she set fashion entirely at defiance. Her hair hung on her shoulders in long, heavy ringlets. Her dress was loose where it should have been tight, and tight where it should have been loose. Unhooped, and unbraided, she was free to move, to walk, nay, to run, unimpeded by flowing robes, uncompressed by ribs of steel.

The aristocratic beauties of Belgravia will smile, some with disdain, some with pity, on reading my description of Kate Kindly. 'Poor man!' they will say; 'he is describing a milkmaid, and fancies it is a young lady.' Even so. Alas! it is even so. Kate Kindly was a milkmaid; at least, she had frequently sat on a three-legged stool, and milked the cow. Both she and Baby had done this; and Biddy declared that 'Miss Baby would make a grand milkwoman intirely: but as for Miss Kate, shure she would ruin the best cow in the barony, the way she tore at her, the craythur!'

And now for a portrait of Baby; though, sooth to say, she scarcely needs one. She was a reproduction of her elder sister. They were twins; and so wonderfully alike, that the same description serves for both. In outward appearance, and in the tone of their voices, they were identical; inwardly, they differed. Kate was the reflection of her mother, all life and animation. Baby was, as Mrs. Kindly often said, 'Papa in petticoats,' quiet, thoughtful, and subdued. And yet, though differing so entirely in disposition, how they loved each other, those two beautiful sisters!

How Baby's tender, melancholy, grey eyes lighted up at the lively sallies of her gay and joyous-hearted sister! And how Kate, in her wildest humour, when fun and frolic were bubbling over in all the lightheartedness of innocence and youth, would suddenly fling herself down by Baby's side; and, listening to the full, rich tones of her voice, become as hushed and calm and gentle as a little child!

Baby's was indeed a wondrous voice—clear, liquid, and untaught as a bird's; and to hear her pour forth 'in the stilly night' the native melodies of her fatherland, would bring tears to the eyes and flutterings to the heart of any but an *habitué* of the opera, whose scientific ear is alone attuned to faultless vocalization and chromatic scales.

Kate's claim to the dear name of 'Baby' was of but one hour's duration. '*This* is 'The Baby,'' said the proud mother, as she fondly kissed her second-born, and 'Baby' she was from that day. Few, besides her own family and the clergyman who christened her, knew that her name was 'Mary.'

* * * *

* * * *

'Kate! is that you?'

'It is I, mama.'

'Who's I?—Baby?'

'Yes, mama. We want you and papa to come and have tea with us on the lawn—do please.'

'My dear, you should never either walk or talk quickly; the only way I can possibly tell you two apart is by your walking and talking; and to-night you rushed into the window just like Kate, and have been chattering away like her, too!'

'Oh, mama! you are only joking; *you* know which is which if no one else does. But will you come out, please?'

At that instant, before either Mr. or Mrs. Kindly had time to reply, in sprang Kate, who was tired of waiting the result of Baby's diplomacy.

'Good gracious, child!' exclaimed Mrs. Kindly, laughing. 'There is no doubt who this is. What now?'

'Look here, mama!—Papa, look!'

'Well, my love, what is it? A dirty little hand is all I see.'

'It's not dirty, papa—at least not very. I've been grubbing about in the grass, so perhaps it is rather. But do look at these lovely—oh, dear!—why they have gone out!'

Her father smiled at her look of dismay. 'I see what they are,' he said. 'The light of the lamp has put out *their* light. Take them into the darkness, Kate, and they will shine again.'

'Of course they will! How foolish I was not to remember that. I did know it, but forgot just for a moment. Come, papa! Baby, bring mama, the tea is poured out; it is really. You have no idea how warm and lovely the evening is—not the least damp; and the glow-worms look so beautiful on the lawn!'

'Bless my heart, child, you will pull your papa to pieces,—and here's Baby nearly as bad—I declare you'll spoil her, Kate, I shall send you to school. Come, William! We may as well go peaceably, as wait to be dragged out of the window.'

'There, now, is it not ten thousand times better than being stewed up in the drawing-room such a night as this, mama?'

Mama kissed her. 'It's nine hundred and ninety-nine times better, Miss Madcap, not a bit more.'

'Well!' laughed Kate, 'that's enough. Are you satisfied with the change, papa?'

'Yes, my love. Hallo! a little change here would be as well, I think.' He stretched his arm towards Kate.

'Where, papa? What is it?'

'Only a glow-worm crawling into my cup.'

'Oh, so it is. Stop a moment; I'll take it off. There, lie down with your brothers and sisters.' And so—

> 'The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter
> And aye *the tea* was growing better.'

'What are you thinking of, William?' said Mrs. Kindly, after rather a long pause in the conversation.

'I was thinking that perhaps at this very moment they are killing more sheep up in the mountains.'

'I wish you would not torment yourself so, dear William, about these horrid wretches. They and their doings are never out of your head.'

'I think of little else I allow; I am very foolish I dare say, but I cannot help it. It is not merely the cruelty and brutality of the proceedings, nor even the lawlessness that they proclaim, that distresses me; but it is that such doings are a blow to my long-cherished hopes that I cannot get over; for I fear the blow is fatal.'

'Oh William!' Mrs. Kindly laid her hand affectionately on his shoulder and looked at him with tears in her eyes.

She knew how long and how zealously he had laboured for the good, both mental and physical, of his poor, ignorant, neglected, fellow-countrymen. She knew how the desire to better their condition, to educate, to civilize, to humanize them, had for years been the darling wish of his heart. She knew all this, and she could not bear the tone of despondency in which he now spoke.

'Yes, Mary,' he continued; 'I fear this blow will prove fatal to my hopes. You know I do not easily despond. You are aware how I have clung to the belief of ultimate success in the face of prophecies of failure on every side. Even you were against me at first. You feared I should not succeed. Others spoke more decidedly; they were certain I should not. Well! there is no use in shutting one's eyes to facts,—I am beaten, I own it. You were all right, and I was wrong. This last outrage has convinced me that it is in vain to attempt to educate and civilize the people as long as their priests are determined that they shall not be educated and civilized.'

'After all these years of devotion to the cause, too, dear William; for I am sure you have devoted both your time and your money for the last twenty years to this one object—the people's good—as no one ever did before! And to meet with such a return as this! It is disgraceful!—disgusting!'

'Exactly so, it is that which disheartens me. If, after twenty-two years of unceasing endeavours on my part to benefit these people, they turn against me, destroy my property, and threaten my person, I give it up.'

'And without any provocation, without the slightest cause, they have turned against you. You had a perfect right to let your mountains to whom you pleased!'

'Yes; and moreover it was not until after I had offered them as sheep-walks to every farmer on my property, and they had been refused, that I wrote to the Northumberland grazier who took them. Now, setting aside the question of right, which I undoubtedly possess, of letting my lands to whom I choose, how short-sighted is the policy of these people. The more I make of my property, the more I spend upon it, and, consequently, the more people I employ. Whilst cutting the throats of the sheep, they are cutting their own also. But, poor ignorant blockheads that they are, they can't see this, and the priests take good care not to tell them. On the contrary, they persuade them that all my improvements, that everything I do in fact, is for my own advantage and not for theirs. I know they do this, I have had proofs of it over and over again. But I had hoped that the facts daily presented to their view of cleanliness and comfort, of better food, better clothing, of schools built, roads made, a post established, medical attendance provided, and many other improvements in their social and moral position—I had hoped, I say, that all these facts would have proved, even to the most thoughtless or the most prejudiced, that I had consulted their good as well as my own.'

'Far more than your own—a thousand times more than your own, William.'

'As far as education goes, and civilization also, certainly their good was foremost. They were, many of them, little better than heathens when I first came here. Totally neglected by their priests, they literally did not know right from wrong.'

'They were not likely to learn *that* from those gentlemen,' murmured Mrs. Kindly.

'But,' continued her husband, 'I don't deny that I hoped to benefit myself also. I have spent a large sum of money on the property since I had it. What with buildings, road making, and the draining and reclaiming of land, I have sunk a good deal of money; and it is but natural that I should wish to get it back again. No man employs his capital without expecting to get some sort of return. He would be a fool if he did. But these priests won't let me benefit either myself or the people; so I suppose I must give it up.'

There was a silence of some minutes. Mr. Kindly's tone of despondency and bitterness had cast a gloom over his wife and daughters, for bitterness and despondency were alike foreign to his nature.

At length Mrs. Kindly said quickly, as though struck by a sudden thought, 'What did you mean, William, by saying they had threatened you?'

'This.' He took a letter from his pocket, and, opening it deliberately, read as follows:

'Mister Kindly, Sur,

'If you lets yure mountains to them English raparees look out for yurself, for we are the boys to cut other fokes throtes besides sheeps, Mr. Kindly.

'Yures to comand,

'Captin Rok.'

'Oh, William! when did you get this?'

'A short time ago; just before I came in.'

'Was that the letter the man gave you, papa, when you were talking to Donovan?' asked Kate.

'Yes, that's the very letter. I read it at once, and asked Donovan if he knew the man who brought it; but he did not. He was a stranger to him, he said.'

'Which I don't believe, papa.'

'Why not, Kate?'

'Because I am quite sure I saw a glance of recognition—of intelligence, or whatever you call it, pass between that man and Donovan.'

'Donovan was never a favourite of yours, Kate.'

'No, papa, he never was.'

'And what has the poor man done to offend you, my love? One should never take idle fancies against any one.'

'He has never done anything to offend me; but I don't like the expression of his face. He is a false man—a deceitful man: besides, I have heard many things against him.'

'What things, Kate?'

'Of his cruelty, papa, and hard-heartedness.'

'That is very bad if it be true; but Donovan, I know, has enemies. Most industrious and prosperous men have, especially when they live amongst those who are neither the one nor the other. But what reason have you for calling him deceitful and false, Kate?'

'I can't explain why. A look now and then, and these stories I have heard against him, some of which I know to be true; and one thing besides makes me distrust him,—his fawning, cringing manner to all of us, especially to you, papa. And, in the middle of his palavering, I have several times caught a dark look of hatred and revenge. Oh, *such* a look, papa! when he thought no one saw him. I can't bear the man.'

They all knew that, although Kate was impetuous and impulsive, she was also remarkably quick and clear-sighted, and was truth itself. Mr. Kindly, therefore, did not laugh at what she said, but, on the contrary, answered gravely,—

'I am sure, Kate, you would not lightly or thoughtlessly speak of Donovan thus. I hope you are mistaken; but I shall watch him closely, and make inquiries concerning these stories of cruelty you talk of; for in these ticklish times, it behoves one to be careful whom one trusts. I have often before heard you express your dislike of Donovan; and imagined that it was only a fancy on your part, which was of no great consequence one way or another; but now 'times have changed,' as they say, and I must change too I suppose; though suspicion is a thing I dislike particularly, and have never been in the habit of practising.'

'No, not half enough, William; you have been cheated, imposed on, and . . .'

'Done to a turn!' said a gruff voice in their ears.

'Oh!' with a start.

'Oh!' with a jump.

'Oh!' with both start and jump.

'How can you be so tiresome, Archie!' said Kate.

'Or so impertinent! To tell your father he was done to a turn!' cried his mother.

'Oh, what beautiful fish!' said Baby, peeping into his basket.

'Had good sport, Archie?'

'Yes, sir, capital. Caught six brace of beauties, as Baby says, though she can't see their heads from their tails,' was the reply of Archibald Patrick Kindly, the only son and eldest child of the Kindlys of Ballyblunder.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ARCHIBALD PATRICK KINDLY.

ARCHIBALD PATRICK KINDLY was a Patagonian, on far too large a scale to be shoved either into a corner or the end of a chapter. Although but twenty years old, he had the limbs of a giant, and the thews and sinews of a Hercules. Born and bred in the wilds of D * * *, inured from his childhood to a life of activity and exercise, he was as light of foot as a deer, and as strong as a mountain bull. His light, curling hair, and laughing blue eyes, were in curious contrast to those of his sisters; and yet he resembled them in the expression of his countenance, a family likeness, which all can see, though none explain, and which exists despite of disparity of features, difference of colour, and all the rest of it. But the person he most resembled, according to his mother, was her maternal grandfather, Archibald Lord Campbell of that ilk, after whom our Archie was named. In disposition, he resembled Kate,—frank, fiery, and full of fun; quite as careless, and, in justice I must add, quite as warm-hearted and good-tempered.

He was a lieutenant in the —th regiment of the line; and at the time of which I speak, quartered at * * *, distant from Ballyblunder about ten miles. This enabled him to be frequently with his family.

When Archie heard of the threatening letter his father had received, and of Kate's suspicions with regard to Donovan, he was for instantly starting up and chastising said Donovan on the spot.

'I'll break every bone in his skin, sir, if I can catch him. The sneaking, shuffling vagabond! I . . .'

'Gently, Archie, gently! We don't yet know whether the man is true or false; and, besides, I will have no breaking of bones. You are too fond of violent measures, Archie. If you don't mind, you will be getting yourself into a scrape.'

'It's only his way of speaking, papa. He doesn't mean anything,' laughed Kate.

'Don't I?' muttered Archie, *sotto voce*.

'It is a foolish way of speaking however. Violent speaking and violent acting do more harm than good, nine times out of ten.'

'Well! I was going to say, that I wished I knew who had brought that letter; but I suppose I had better not know, for I am afraid it was for no peaceful purpose I was anxious on the subject.'

Mr. Kindly smiled. He admired his son's high spirit and his hatred of all that was false and mean;

but he feared for his impetuous and quick temper, and never lost an opportunity of inculcating coolness and gentleness—his own great and good characteristics.

'By-the-bye, Archie,' said Mr. Kindly, 'I thought two of your brother officers were coming with you? Your mother surely told me so!'

'They are coming to-morrow, sir. They were both on duty to-day.'

'What are their names? I forget.'

'Fortescue, sir.'

'Oh yes; I remember—Fortescue. Devonshire people, are they not?'

'Oh no! They are thorough-bred Paddies. Their father has a large property somewhere in the county Limerick.'

'Irishmen are they? And these two friends of yours are very much alike, I think you said?'

'As like as two peas, sir—ridiculously so: as like as these two children here.'

'Children! Well done you old man! I am nearly as old as you, and much wiser!'

'Wiser, Kate! Oh, come! Recollect your unjust suspicions of poor Donovan!'

'I don't care; I am much wiser: tell us about these heroes of yours: what are they like?'

'Did you ever read or hear of the Admirable Crichton, Kate?'

'Yes, of course I have. You gave me the book yourself; and you used to say that you intended to be just like him; at which piece of conceit I always laughed; and you cried: don't you remember, Archie?'

'No, Katherine Kindly: but all I can say is, that my friends, the Fortescues, are exactly . . .'

'Now, Archie, don't be ridiculous!'

'Are exactly . . .'

'I won't believe it. You always think your friends are perfection. Don't you remember, mama, that horrid Mr. Creigh? Archie thought him an Admirable Crichton till we opened his eyes to the fact of his being a very ordinary mortal indeed.'

'Are exactly . . .'

'Archie, be quiet! How provoking you are! Tell us really, without any nonsense, what they are like.'

'My dear Kate, you won't let him!'

'Because I know what he is going to say, mama; and I know . . .'

'Nonsense, my dear! You know nothing about it: go on, Archie,' continued Mrs. Kindly.

'Are exactly—the contrary to the Admirable Crichton; seeing that they attempt everything and succeed in nothing.'

'Now that is not what you were going to say, Archie?'

'Yes, it was indeed.'

'Well! they wouldn't say so themselves, I'm sure.'

'Yes, they would exactly. Come, I won't tease you any more, Kate. Here's what they really are:—Taller than thee; shorter than me; older than she (pointing to Baby); younger than he (pointing to his father).'

'How impertinent of you, Archie, calling papa, 'he.' You ought to be ashamed of yourself. I shall not stay any longer to hear you talk nonsense. And I don't the least want to know what your stupid friends are like.'

'It's time to go in,' said Mrs. Kindly. 'Come, children, you will all catch your deaths: dear me, how wet the grass is!'

'A tremenjous jew indeed! Come, Baby-bunting;' and stooping down, the young giant lifted his sister from the ground, and walked towards the house, dandling her in his arms, as if she were a child, instead of a fine grown young lady of five-feet-six.

'Bye, Baby-bunting,
Father's gone a hunting.'

'Oh, Archie! put me down! Please put me down!'

'Hush—sh-sh-sh-sh—lie still, Baby.—Don't kick—there!' And so saying, he safely deposited his struggling burden at full length upon the sofa in the drawing-room, totally regardless of dishevelled hair and rumpled dress. Brothers pay small respect to their sisters in these particulars.

* * * *

After the ladies had retired, Mr. Kindly entered more fully into the subject of the sheep-killing to his son than he had hitherto done. He had hoped that the first outrage would not have been repeated; but in that hope he was disappointed. More than a thousand sheep had been destroyed upon the mountains he had let to the English graziers, and this fact could no longer be concealed. Archie had no idea that the outrage had been carried to such an extent; and, with his usual impetuosity, he was for dashing at once into the mountains.

'Only to look out, sir,' he said. 'Surely you can have no objection to that.'

'There are people on the look-out, Archie; and have been for the last three or four weeks.'

'And much good they have done, sir. They have never taken a man, or saved a sheep:—very likely killed the sheep themselves: I would not trust one of them.'

'Not even Pat Purdy? Your old friend, Pat?'

'Yes: Oh yes! I would trust him, though he is a Catholic: he would not betray you even to please a priest, and that's saying a good deal. He is as true as steel, Pat is. He's on the mountain to-night, is he, sir?'

'Yes, and three or four more men with him; watchers are constantly there, but they have taken no one, though sheep have been killed the very nights they have been on the watch.'

'Pat is as true as steel, as I said before; but he is not cunning enough for these rascals: he is the most unsuspicious and innocent of mortals: they would turn him round their fingers as easy as look at him: I wish you would let me go with him next time, sir.

I'll promise not to be rash, or—more violent than is necessary.'

'We will see about it, Archie. I have written to Dublin to ask for the police; I don't know whether they will send them or no. By-the-bye, here is that threatening letter that I told you some foolish fellow had sent me.'

* * * *

'Pooh! A pack of rubbish! I should have thought they knew you better than to send this,' said Archie, when he had read the letter.

'Yes, so should I; but it seems they do not. I have been very forbearing towards them on several occasions—perhaps too much so—and they presume upon that forbearance now probably, and think to frighten me away from my post; but they are mistaken.'

Mr. Kindly looked and spoke with a sternness his son had never before observed in him.

'I am so glad . . .' and there he stopped.

'Of what Archie?' said his father smiling. 'Glad that I am not frightened by that blood-thirsty epistle? Why, my boy, did you fancy that I should be?'

'No, sir; I did not think that: but you have always been so kind and considerate to these people—overlooking faults, forgiving offences, and . . . and, in short, I scarcely expected you would send for the police . . . or . . . speak so determinedly as you spoke just now; and I was very glad that you did.'

Mr. Kindly smiled again; and laying his hand on his son's arm, he said,—

'I have tried to bear the short-comings of these people with patience, Archie: I have done my best to teach them what is right, and to warn them against what is wrong: I found them poor, ignorant, and half savage; I endeavoured to civilize, educate, and enrich them; but I knew that old prejudices must be overcome—old customs and habits rooted out—old (miscalled) rights abolished. Now, prejudice and ignorance, when they go hand-in-hand together (which, by-the-bye, they always do, more or less), are toughish antagonists to contend with. I was, however, prepared for these difficulties, and persevered, hoping that, by God's assistance, I should succeed at last in impressing these poor people with the fact that, in all I did, I was labouring for their good. And, Archie, had it not been for the priests, I believe I should have succeeded in my object: but it was not to be: perhaps it was presumptuous on my part to undertake the task: my intentions were good, but the judgment which prompted them was probably bad. However, be that as it may, my duty now seems clear enough: I cannot, either as a magistrate or a man, allow the laws to be set at defiance, and property to be destroyed with impunity. Forbearance or indecision at such a moment would be most culpable; I trust that I know how to be firm when necessary: and though I will not permit myself to be actuated by any spirit of revenge in my pursuit of these marauders, I *will* pursue them with all the power the law can give me, until they are either caught and delivered up to the justice they have set at naught, or driven out of the country.'

'And you will let me assist you, sir?'

'I will, Archie; and shall be very glad of your assistance, if you will only be prudent and cautious in what you do—not too violent—never violent at all indeed, unless it becomes absolutely necessary.'

'Oh no! of course not, sir! I don't want a row with the rascals: but, at the same time, if I were to come upon any of them in the act of cutting these sheep's throats, I should naturally do my best to seize them, and they would naturally resist the capture; violence would be sure to follow; but it would not be my fault: you would not wish me to let the fellows go, sir?'

'That would depend upon circumstances, Archie. For instance, if the party you caught were armed, and more numerous than your own, it would not be wise to attack them; or if you recognized any of the men, it would be unnecessary to take them on the spot; they might be taken afterwards. In short, I want you to use discretion, and to be governed by reason, not passion. Depend upon it, my boy, calmness and judgment are not incompatible with determination and daring; though young men can scarcely understand thecombination, I dare say. You are both hasty and impetuous, Archie; therefore it is that I warn you against giving way too readily to the impulse that happens to be uppermost. 'A word and a blow' is a very pernicious doctrine: on the contrary, pause and reflect: ponder many words before you strike one blow. And now, Archie, it is bed-time, I think. You must be tired after your long walk: Good night.'

'Good night, sir. I am not at all tired; and . . . I meant . . . I should like . . . to walk as far as Slaughmacuish, just to see how things are going on, if you have no objection.'

Mr. Kindly turned, and, looking earnestly at his son, said, 'No, Archie, I have no objection, if you will bear in mind all I have been saying to you.'

'I will indeed, sir. You may trust me.'

'Very well. You will probably come upon Pat Purdy and his party on Slaughmacuish: take care of yourself, Archie.'

'Oh yes, sir; I'll take care, never fear: I'll just run up to my room for a moment; and then I'm off.'

'Never fear!' repeated Mr. Kindly, as he went slowly up stairs. 'Easy to say—easy to say: but that hot-headed boy makes me fear: there is a bad feeling abroad against me and mine I am pretty sure: and those fellows on the mountain are wild and savage when their blood is up. Ay, it's easy to say 'never fear.''

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# CHAPTER V.

## SLAUGHMACUISH.

ARCHIE'S mission to his room, to get a revolver and to replenish his cigar-case, being accomplished, he seized a stout blackthorn, and sallied forth into the still, silent night. Slaughmacuish, whither he was bent, was about three miles distant. He soon left the road, and, striking across a bog by a path he knew well, he was not long in reaching the foot of the mountain.

There were now two courses to pursue; either to proceed straight up, or to take a circuitous path to the left. He decided in favour of the former; it was most in accordance with his usual mode of proceeding.

There was no moon; but the sky was studded with countless myriads of glittering stars; and nights in June are never very dark.

As he ascended the side of the mountain, he stopt now and then to listen and look around him. He had heard nothing, seen nothing as yet; when suddenly a sound—a curious sound—met his ear. He listened eagerly.

'There it is again!' he muttered. 'What can it be? There! A sort of shuffling, struggling noise; not far off, either. By heavens! it's the bleat of a sheep, if I ever heard one!'

Grasping his shillelah firmly, and setting his teeth, Archie started off in the direction whence the noise proceeded, as quickly and quietly as possible; but the rough and rugged ground, and the uncertain light, would not permit of very rapid movement: on he went, heedless of the rocks and roots against which he constantly stumbled: at length he came to a dead halt. At his feet lay a great white object, over which he had well-nigh fallen. He glared around with flashing eyes and trembling lip. . . . Well was it that no living form met his gaze at that moment—no form, that is, of human shape—or, much I fear me, mischief would have followed.

On the ground before him lay a dead, or rather dying sheep, for it still kicked convulsively. But where was the brute who had ruthlessly cut the poor animal's throat? Where indeed? Hiding behind a rock within twenty yards of the spot perhaps; or creeping away to another part of the mountain, and to another victim. . . . To have such deeds done almost before his face, quite within his hearing, and he not able to prevent them—not to catch the scoundrels! Oh, if he could but lay hold of one of them! He clenched his blackthorn with a fierce grasp, and shook it menacingly at the imaginary marauder.

And now what was he to do? It was useless staying there: they did not kill the sheep for the purpose of food: no one would come back for it; it might rot where it fell, for all they cared: they would be off in search of another: probably at that moment they were repeating their bloody work.

'The devil!' he said aloud; 'and I standing here, doing nothing: but what can I do? Who is this? Pat Purdy I suppose. Pat, is that you?'

'Shure it's the Capt'in, boys! Bad look to me, bud I thought 'twar one of them murtherin' villians, so I did! Has your honour heard nothin'? Me an' Mike here, fancied we heard a noise out this away, sirr.'

'I've heard something, and I've seen something; and so may you, if you'll step forward a few paces. Look here!'

'Holy Virgin! another sheep!' Pat knelt down and examined the poor animal. 'The life is scarce out of the craythur. It's warm yet, Capt'in.'

'Warm! I should think so: it was kicking when I came up not ten minutes ago.'

'Kickin'! Lord sake, Capt'in Archie! The thieves of the world! The infarnal vagabones! Did ye see anny of them, sirr?'

'See any of them? I shouldn't be standing fuming here if I had.'

'Faith, an' that's thrue for ye, Capt'in; ye would not: an' it's fumin' ye are, an' no mistake. Bad look to the blaggard that did this! May I niver! bud I'd give me best hat to have hoult . . . Hullo! What's this at all?'

'What's what?'

'By the hoky look here, Masther Archie!'

'Ah ha! a knife, Pat! and all wet too! It's what the brute has done his bloody work with.'

'Ay, sirr; an' dhropt it like a hot potati when he heard your honour comin': the murtherin' villian! Och Masther Archie, Capt'in, to think how handy ye war to the raparee, an' he to 'scape! It's that vexes me most of all.'

'And so it does me: confound the fellow! But there's no use crying after spilt milk; better luck next time; and the way to get it is to work for it: this knife may lead to something; though I can't see what at present.' So saying, he put it in his pocket. 'Now Pat, whom have you with you?'

'The two Freemans, sirr, Tom an' Mike; an' better nor 'cuter boys there isn't atwixt this an' Cork.'

'I'm glad of it:—now, whisper:—you and Tom Freeman set off:—you are all armed, I suppose?'

'Faix, we are so, Capt'in! We've aech of us as grand a shillelah as is to be found in the county itself.'

'Sticks! Have you nothing better than sticks?'

'Nothin' better is it? Shure what would be better, Capt'in Archie?' exclaimed Pat, indignant at the implied slight to his beloved shillelah.

'Well well; there's no time to lose, it will be daybreak soon. You and Tom Freeman start off for the bottom of the mountain: take the path to the left by the wall, and so past the new house; keep a sharp look out; arrest any one you fall in with; make for

O'Neil's tower, and wait there till I join you. Mike, you go to the right, by the stone quarry; and when you get to the foot of the hill, make for the tower also: keep your eyes open; stop any one you meet; and if you want help, or you either Pat, give the signal whistle, and I'll be with you in no time. I am going straight down the face of the mountain; and shall, consequently, be between you both: now, sharp's the word! We have lost too much time already.'

As soon as his myrmidons were out of sight, Archie himself started, creeping slowly and cautiously down the hill-side. When he had advanced about a hundred yards, he turned round, and deliberately retraced his steps to within twenty paces of the dead sheep. Here he came to a halt; and, seating himself behind a huge rock, he 'bided his time.' 'Though they won't come back for the slaughtered sheep, the man may come back for his knife,' he thought; 'first, because he will want it for future use; and secondly, because it might give an inconvenient clue to the name of its owner.'

'Master Archie,' as Pat Purdy, who had known him from a child, still frequently called him,—Master Archie was a sharp fellow. Young as he was, he could put this and that together. True, he was apt to, what people of slow perceptions call, 'jump to conclusions;' but, for all that, he was oftener right than many who crawl to them. Clever, clear-sighted people, who see at a glance that which takes ordinary mortals much time and a minute inspection to comprehend, are often accused of 'jumping to conclusions.' If the conclusions are right, why should they not jump to them? The sooner they get there the better.

Motionless as the rock against which he leant, sat Archie, for more than half-an-hour. Not a sound had he heard; not a living thing had he seen. He was on the point of moving away, and joining his companions, when the sharp outline of the rocks which cut the sky directly in front of him, about fifty yards beyond the dead sheep, was broken by an object suddenly thrust up above the horizon.

Archie's quick eye perceived it in a moment. 'Surely,' he thought, 'that was not there before; it looks like a bit of rock, too. But no; I am certain it was not there till this very . . . Ha! I thought so! It's clear enough what it is now.'

The day breaks rapidly in the month of June. Indeed, long before sunrise, there is light enough in that lovely time of year, to discern objects at a far greater distance than was the figure which now cautiously approached the sheep.

The man stopt several times, looking sharply round on all sides as he advanced step by step. At length he reached the spot where the sheep lay; and, giving one more precautionary glance, he knelt down, and groped about on the ground. The fellow had some long instrument in his hand; whether a pole or a gun Archie could not discern.

He turned the sheep over, pulled aside the heather, and even rolled away large stones and pieces of broken rock in the eagerness of his search. Presently muttered curses were uttered; then louder oaths; and the man was about to get up from his hands and knees, when, in one of his quick glances to see that all was safe, he was astounded by the vision of a gigantic figure standing by his side.

With gaping mouth and staring eyes, he remained for a few seconds petrified with astonishment. Archie stooped, and laid hold of what he now perceived to be a gun. The man held it fast.

'Let go!' said Archie, shaking him violently. 'Do you hear? Let go this instant!'

Still no answer:—the gun was clutched tighter than ever; and now with both hands.

Archie's patience was oozing out fast. He tried to wrench the piece out of the man's hands; but he retained his grip, and, springing suddenly to his feet, he faced his captor.

'You let go!' he said, speaking for the first time. 'What right have you to it?'

'Pshaw!' said Archie, giving the gun so sudden and violent a twist that it broke short off in the middle, the stock being left in his own hands, and the barrels in those of his antagonist.

The man, who was a powerful, broad-shouldered fellow, uttered a savage oath, and, quick as thought, aimed a desperate blow at Archie's head with the barrels.

Archie closed instantly, receiving the blow on his shoulder as he did so. This was all that was wanting to fire his smouldering wrath. He tore the weapon from the man's grasp in an instant, whirled it over his head, and catching hold of him by his neck and his nether garments, he fairly lifted him from the ground, and flung him after his own gun-barrels; and though he did not fly quite so far or so fast as they did, he came to earth again with force enough to knock all the breath out of his body. And there he lay where he fell, close to the sheep, and quite as motionless.

Archie stood, his eyes flashing with fury, and his limbs quivering with exertion—a young Titan upsetting a world—a Samson raging amongst the Philistines.

'Confound the fellow!' he said, rubbing his shoulder, 'it would have served him right if I had broken his neck; I hope I have not though:' then crooking the first finger of his left hand, he inserted the knuckle into his mouth, *secundem artem*, and blew twice, a sharp, shrill whistle.

The signal was answered from the round tower at the foot of the mountain, immediately beneath where he stood; and in due course, Pat Purdy and the two Freemans made their appearance.

'Do you know that fellow, Pat?' asked Archie.

'Do I know him is it, Masther Archie?' he replied, peering into the man's face. 'Do I know the road to me mouth? Faix, I do so. It's big Ben Brady, divil another!'

'And who is big Ben Brady?'

'Faix, Capt'in Archie, he's a bit av a boy as works for farmer Donovan. Bud how came he here at all, doubled up that a way, sirr?'

'I chucked him there. But I am not going to carry him home; so get up my man, come!' and Archie unceremoniously pushed the recumbent figure with his foot.

'Chucked him there,' repeated Pat. 'Musha! musha! bud the Capt'in talks av chuckin' big Ben, an' he fourteen stone, no less, as it might be puttin' a pavin' stone! More power, Capt'in. Faix, its yerself has the sthrong arrum an' the stout heart.'

After several gentle admonitions to rise, on the part of Archie, big Ben once more got upon his feet, sulky and subdued; but no persuasions would induce him to open his lips to give an account of himself; he was therefore marched off a prisoner to Ballyblunder. Finally, he was committed to take his trial at the assizes for sheep-killing; and for the present we will take leave of him.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE TWINS.

IT was broad daylight before Archie and his party reached home. But Archie's iron constitution defied fatigue; and notwithstanding his long walk in the morning, his night-work, and want of sleep; a plunge in the river and a couple of hours' rest, enabled him to appear at the early family breakfast-table 'as fresh as a four-year old,' as he told his father.

'Not tired after your long walk yesterday, Archie?' asked Mrs. Kindly.

'Not at all, thank you, mother; nor after my short walk last night.'

'Last night! Where did you go last night?'

'To Slaughmacuish, dear mother; and I had very good sport.'

'You did not see any one, Archie, did you?' asked Mr. Kindly quickly.

'Yes, sir, I did:—bagged him too!

And in the midst of sundry ejaculations of surprise, fear, and admiration; the story of the capture of big Ben Brady was recounted.

Mrs. Kindly was sure Archie must be very much hurt, and wanted him to strip and show his wounded shoulder. But Archie declared it was nothing, and refused to exhibit.

'It's lucky the fellow did not hit you on the head, my boy,' said his father gravely.

'It was no fault of his that he did not, sir: but I dodged him; and when the blow fell, I had closed in, and was so near him that a good deal of the force of it was taken off, you know. But it 'riled' me at the time, I confess, and I had half-a-mind to break his head for him; but I recollected your admonition against violence, sir, and refrained.'

'I am glad of it, Archie: it reflects the greatest credit upon your forbearance that you did not touch the man after he had assaulted you so savagely. Upon my word, I could scarcely have blamed you if you had struck him again.'

'Why, sir, as to that, I did not strike him certainly; but neither did I quite keep my hands off him; that could hardly be expected, I think.'

'Oh! Why, what did you do then? Disarmed him, I suppose?'

'Yes; I disarmed him I believe. I scarcely know whether I did or no. I was in a towering passion, and that's the truth; but I caught the fellow up by his head and his heels, as they say, and threw him somewhere or another amongst the rocks: at first I thought I had broken his neck; but he came to all right again after a while.'

'That's your idea of 'no violence,' eh, Archie?' asked Mr. Kindly.

'Why, my dear William, you would not have had him stand still to be beaten, surely? That ruffian would have killed him if he could.'

'Certainly not; Archie was quite right to defend himself; indeed, I don't say he was wrong in anything he did; only his idea of 'no violence' makes me smile, that's all.'

'The young giant! Yes,' laughed Mrs. Kindly; 'you really ought to be careful, Archie, how you use that great strength of yours!'

'But did you really lift big Ben Brady up in your arms and throw him away, Archie?' said Kate. 'I know the man quite well: he is much heavier than papa, I am sure.'

'It's a true bill, Kate. But I didn't feel whether he was heavy or light; I was too much 'riz' to calculate weights.'

'A blow that would have knocked down any ordinary mortal, only 'riz' our Archie. That comes of keeping a tame giant.'

'Fee-fo-fate, I smell the blood of a saucy Kate! and here goes for a drop of it.'

'Be quiet, Archie! Help, mama! Help, please;

he's killing me! Baby, pull his hair; pinch him! Oh! he's tickling me to death! Will nobody help? There! take that, you great rough ogre!'

'I say, you hit a fellow of your own size, will you,' cried Archie, rubbing his cheek and making a ludicrous face at his sister, who had managed to escape from his clutch.

Kate, breathless and beautiful, stood panting on the opposite side of the sofa; her face in a glow; her hair about her shoulders, and her eyes sparkling with fun. She dearly loved a romp with her big brother.

At that precise moment the door opened in a slow, hesitating manner, and two strangers appeared at the entrance.

'The brothers Fortescue! by all that's wonderful—hem! I won't finish the quotation,' cried Archie, starting to his feet, and introducing his friends to his family.

Kate, when it came to her turn; bowed, blushed, and vanished through the open window.

The brothers Fortescue apologized for their intrusion. In vain had they sought for a servant to announce them; in vain had they knocked for admittance; and at length they had ventured to open the door.

Mr. Kindly explained the cause of his servants' remissness: he had no doubt the whole house was in commotion: Archie had captured and brought home one of the sheep-killers, (the Messrs. Fortescue had heard of the sheep-killers of * * ?) and he imagined that every one was talking of, or looking at, the captive. He ended by bidding the brothers heartily welcome;

and Mrs. Kindly, to prove her ready acquiescence in her husband's hospitality, rang the bell, and ordered a fresh supply of whatever the house afforded in the shape of food for the hungry.

The visitors were ravenous. They were really extremely sorry to give so much trouble; but the fact was, they had started early, according to their friend Archie's invitation, and they would have been at Ballyblunder an hour ago, had they not lingered so long by the side of the likeliest-looking trout-stream they had ever seen. They were really very sorry.

Whilst they are satisfying their hunger, we shall have plenty of time to introduce them more particularly than has yet been accomplished.

The brothers Fortescue were about the middle height, neither tall nor short, though alongside of Archie they looked diminutive. Strange, that two pairs of twins should meet together in the same house! but so it was. The brothers Fortescue were twins, and, as Archie had said, 'as like as two peas.' Slight figures, dark hair, bright eyes, and light hearts. They seemed full of life, and fun, and good-humour, and so they were. Irish to the backbone; their country twinkled in the corners of their eyes, and lurked in the curl of their lips, ready to spring forth at a moment's notice into 'broad farce' or 'genteel comedy.'

Findon Fortescue, who had first caught sight of Kate 'in tatters,' as Archie laughingly called it, was continually endeavouring, between each mouthful, to see her again. Instead of her, however, he encountered the placid grey eyes of Baby, and fancied it was Kate come back playing propriety.

'How demure she looks, and how quickly she has put all that immense quantity of hair right again,' he thought.

He had been so flurried and confused when he opened the door, by the scene which burst upon his view, that he had gone through his introduction to the different members of the family in a very incoherent state of mind, and had noted neither Baby's existence nor Kate's flight.

Fanshawe, on the contrary, being behind his brother, did not perceive Kate until her hair had been hastily twisted up out of sight. His attention, therefore, was not so entirely engrossed by her, as to make him unconscious of the presence of her sister.

At length the appetites of the brothers were appeased; and whilst they retired to their rooms to look after their portmanteaux, which had been forwarded by car at 'screech o' day,' Archie left them to collect fishing-rods and tackle, and to 'convarse' Kit Kelly, the keeper, as to the day's proceedings.

'By the powers, Fan, Archie's sister is 'a rale darlint intirely, so she is.' Such eyes! such hair! I'll be bound she has plenty of fun in her too.'

'Which do you mean, Fin?'

'Which? Why, there is only one; that is, besides the mother. I don't mean her, of course.'

'But there are two girls, Fin.'

'Two girls; nonsense! You're dreaming.'

'Why you don't mean to say that you did not see . . . ? Ah! bad luck to you, Fin, it's joking you are.'

'Upon my word, I am not. I never saw but one girl. She was standing behind the sofa when I opened the door; laughing and blushing, with her hair all about her shoulders. How she contrived to make herself 'dacent' so quickly, and to look so demure, I can't tell; but it was the same girl, I'll swear.'

'Ha ha!' laughed his brother, "that bates Banagher.' Why, Fin, I saw the young lady with the laughing eyes and flushed cheeks, vanish through the window.'

'Well, she must have come back down the chimney then; for there she sat on the sofa, looking as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth, I'll take my appledavy.'

Fanshawe laughed loudly. 'Well done Fin! Stick to that, Major Glue! Here comes Archie: now then; Archie, how many sisters have you?'

'Half-a-dozen to be sure; more or less. Why?'

'Because Fin declares that you have but one, and won't believe that we have seen two.'

Archie's eyes twinkled with fun. 'Come and see,' he said.

They followed him down stairs.

'I'll hold you the price of a new hat he has only one, Fan,' said his brother. 'I'll eat my old one if he has more;—if we have seen more than one, I mean.'

'Done! No, I won't either; it wouldn't be fair. I have seen two.'

'Oh, botheration to 'fair.' I'll give you the pull of that. Will you bet?'

'Easy now, boys,' said Archie. 'Wait here till I see are we welcome.'

The brothers stopt; and Archie went forward through the conservatory, which communicated by a glass door with the drawing-room.

He looked in: Kate was there alone: he beckoned to his friends, and they entered the room.

Kate's colour rose for a moment at the recollection of the strange wild figure she must have appeared in the breakfast-room. But she soon regained her composure; and, determined to counterbalance the former impression she feared she must have made, she became unusually quiet and sedate.

Fanshawe Fortescue imagined her to be Baby: and by way of utterly confuting his brother's scepticism, he said, 'Is your sister still in the garden, Miss Kindly? I hope she has forgiven our sudden inroad upon your family circle.'

'My sister in the garden, Mr. Fortescue?'

Kate smiled and blushed: she saw that she and Baby were already confused in identity.

'Yes,' continued Fan, 'we literally drove her away by our rude and unannounced appearance, for which I am anxious to apologize: she was obliged to escape through the open window to avoid us.'

Kate laughed. 'That was I, Mr. Fortescue: it was all Archie's fault.'

'I told you so, Fan,' burst in Findon. 'I beg your pardon, Miss Kindly, but my brother has been so positive that there were two of you; I knew there was but one; I said so; I could not be mistaken; impossible! It was ridiculous to suppose there could be two such . . . such . . .'

'Illegant famales,' suggested Archie.

Fanshawe Fortescue looked quite bewildered. 'Do you mean to say there are *not* two? Miss Kindly, have you really no sister?'

Before Kate had time to reply, Archie put his arm round her waist, and saying, 'Just come with me for a moment.' Excuse me, gentlemen, for interrupting your interesting family researches for a few minutes,' he half led and half dragged her out of the room.

* * * *

The brothers were in hot discussion. 'I told you so,' and 'I don't believe it now,' et cetera, et cetera, when Archie once more made his appearance; but this time with his arm round Baby's waist.

'Oh, if you please, Miss Kindly,' exclaimed Fanshawe, recurring to his last question, 'do tell us if you have a sister.'

'Of course she has. You saw her just now,' said Archie.

'Saw her just now! Where?'

'Here; sitting here, and walking out of the room with me.'

'Why she was!—That was this lady!' stammered Fanshawe, looking more confused than ever.

'Not a bit of it. She was *that* lady, coming in, according to custom, through the window.'

The brothers turned round.—Kate was in the midst of them.

They looked from one to the other, and from the other to one, in utter astonishment. Yes, there were two; there was no doubt about that; but the likeness between them was ridiculous, especially as Baby's eyes now sparkled with fun equal to Kate's, which was all that was wanting to make the resemblance perfect.

Archie rubbed his hands. 'Ha! ha!' he laughed. 'Where are your manners, gentlemen? You'll disgrace the regiment, standing staring at these ladies in that fashion.'

Apologies and explanations, followed by much mirth and merriment, ensued.

'Well,' said Kate, 'I really think you two gentlemen are as much alike as Baby and I can possibly be. I don't know one from the other yet.'

'Oh, you soon will,' said Archie, innocently. 'Fin is always rising a fish, but never hooking one. By-the-bye, you'll come with us, girls, to-day; we are going to Loch Croogh.'

'Oh, yes; if we may. I'll go and ask mama,' cried Kate, delighted at the plan.

'You need not go, for here she is. Mama, may these two school-girls have a holiday, and come and play with us on Loch Croogh?'

'Loch Croogh! Are you going on Loch Croogh, Archie?'

'Yes, mother mine. There's no mistaking of what country you are, mama.' He took both her hands in one of his, and helped her through the window.

'What do you mean, saucy boy? Now, Archie, let go my hands. He always does this when he is going to be impudent. What do you mean about not mistaking my country?'

'Why mama, when one asks you a question, you answer it with another;' and he stooped his great handsome, laughing face, and kissed his mother's forehead. She twitched one of her hands loose, and aimed a tremendous (make-believe) blow at him; up went his head, and Mrs. Kindly beat the air alone.

'Mercy me! You great monster, Archie! There's no reaching you,' she laughingly exclaimed.

'May we go, mama, please?' asked both the sisters.

'Yes, my loves, you may go: don't be mad now Kate; you look half-wild already: take care of them, Archie. You both understand the management of a boat, I have no doubt?' she added, turning a smiling, courteous countenance to the brothers.

A strong affirmative was the matter-of-course reply. Fancy any young man (especially a modest young Irishman) acknowledging ignorance in the matter of a gun, a fishing-rod, a horse, or a boat.

'They both steer uncommonly well, ma'am, I assure you; and can keep it up, hard work though it be, for many hours,' said the incorrigible Archie.

'You don't mind Archie, of course, Mr. Fortescue: you know him well enough, not to . . .'

'Excuse me, mother; this is Mr. Fortescue: he is several years—hours, I mean—older than his brother, Mr. Fanshawe Fortescue; and, consequently, entitled to all the respect due to an elder brother.'

'Really, gentlemen, you are both so much alike, I shall always be making mistakes. I must call one by his christian name, I think.'

'Oh, do call me by my christian name, Mrs. Kindly! My name is 'Fin.''

'Oh, no! You are Mr. Fortescue. *I'm* the Christian. I am 'Fan,' Mrs. Kindly.'

''Fin' and 'Fan!' What do they mean?' laughed Mrs. Kindly.

''Findon' and 'Fanshawe,'' they both exclaimed at once; but we are never called anything but 'Fin' and 'Fan.''

'Well, let me see; you are Mr. Findon, are you not?'

'Yes—that is, I am 'Fin,' not 'Mr. Findon,' please, Mrs. Kindly.'

'I am afraid you must submit to being 'Mr. Findon' at present,' replied Mrs. Kindly, smiling good-humouredly.

'Come along then, 'Mister Findon;' and you, too, 'Mister Fanshawe.' And you girls look alive, and get your things on: I must go and see after the commissariat department, or I shall catch it;

For I happen to know how Fin and Fan
Ate up a donkey and half a man;
Not to mention his majesty, Choo-Cho-Chan,
The king of the Cannibal Islands.

And now, hooroosh! for Loch Croogh and Kit Kelly.'

'Mercy on us, Archie, what a noise you make! I am glad Kit is going with you; he is a steady old fellow, and understands all about boats.'

'It is not on that account, mother dear, that I take Kit. We flatter ourselves,—the 'Brothers Fortescue' and your humble servant,—that we are steady young fellows; and know a boat from a boot-jack as well as e'er a Kit Kelly in the counthry. But the fact is, ma'am . . . whisper'—he put his face close to his mother's—'the fact is, I take Kit as a sort of chaperoon to the young leedies—a species of dooenna, you know. I have uncommon delicate feelin's that away, ma'am; an' I wouldn't expose the bashful maidens to the impident glances of . . . . . . Oh, what a shame!' rubbing his smitten cheek. ''Could no other arm be found than the one which once embraced me' to inflict such a confounded box on the ear. Here are the girls, I declare! and Kit is fidgetting about outside, waiting to be off; I see him:—come along!—good by, mother dear! I'd give you a kiss, only I'm afraid of coming near you.'

'Come then; put your great head down; kiss and be friends: take care of the girls, Archie; and good sport to you, gentlemen.'

*Exeunt omnes.*

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# CHAPTER VII.

## FISHING AND PHILANDERING.

LOCH Croogh was barely half-a-mile from the house: the party, therefore, decided upon walking there, followed by Kit Kelly, carrying an immense basket of provisions, and talking incessantly.

Kit was a small wiry man of some fifty years, with grizzled hair and not an ounce of superfluous flesh on his bones. Quaint in ideas and speech, with the national turn for fun strongly developed, Kit was an amusing, clever fellow. Moreover, he was honest and faithful; and the tenacity and affection with which he clung to every member of the Ballyblunder family, was well worthy of admiration. From 'the Masther' down to 'Miss Baby' there was no 'aqual' to them. But his especial delight and pride was centered in 'Capt'in' Archie.' Personal strength and daring are always looked up to and admired by the Irish peasantry.

'Kit, where shall we commence work to-day?' said

Archie, when they were all seated in a wide, roomy boat, built purposely for fishing, and consequently heavy, safe, and slow.

Kit extended his open palm to the breeze: 'The win's sou'-west, Capt'in; we'd best pull to the back of Ballacroogh at wunst, av that same is agree'ble to the leedies.'

In all matters appertaining to fishing, Kit was an authority, and his advice invariably followed.

'You will find Kit a character,' said Kate (who was steering) to Findon Fortescue, who sat in the stern sheets with Baby and her. 'He has lived with us all his life, and was with papa long before he married: by constant intercourse with 'the Quality,' he has picked up all sorts of long words and polite ideas, which he introduces according to his own fashion.'

'So I perceive: he would not venture even to select a spot for our sport without consulting (most properly) the wishes of 'the leedies.' He is a bit of a sailor too, to judge from his manner and occasional sea-phrases.'

'Oh yes,' laughed Kate, 'Kit is always nautical the moment he is 'afloat,' as he calls a row or a sail on Loch Croogh. Dear old Kit! we are all so fond of him; and he is so faithful and affectionate, and so handy; he really is quite clever, though you would not believe it perhaps.'

'Yes, indeed I do, Miss Kindly; I know my countrymen too well to judge of their abilities by their appearance; not but what Kit is uncommonly well 'got up'—quite man-o'-war fashion.'

At this moment the conversation was interrupted by Kit himself, who was seated in the bows overhauling fishing tackle, and, as he would have expressed it, 'conning the boat's course.' 'Starbud, Miss Kate; starbud you may—steady—ey—ey—so.'

'That's right, Commodore Kit,' cried Archie, who with Fanshawe Fortescue was pulling leisurely over the smooth surface of the loch; 'that's right; keep a sharp look-out ahead; we all trust ourselves to your guidance, Captain.'

'An' so ye may; an' I'll bring yees an' the young leedies safe an' sound to Ballacroogh. Ah! shure it's laughin' at me ye are. Well, well! but may be ye wouldn't laugh av I conducted the vessel upon a sunken rock, Capt'in Archie?'

'A sunken rock, Kit! There are no rocks between us and Ballacroogh,—not nearer the surface than a hundred feet at all events.'

'Faix! there are *so*. Mind your hellum, Miss Kate, she's fallin' off. Take a pull *av* the fore-sheet; Och! murther! we've no sail on her, I mis-remimber. Steady—ey—ey—so.'

But it was only for a short time 'steady,' if ever; and the boat's nose was seldom looking straight at one object for long together, in spite of Kit's continued admonitions and directions.

At length they neared Ballacroogh, and Kit now prepared to pilot them in.

'Starbud, Miss Kate dear: Ah! bad look to me, but it's larbud ye go! we'll all be dhrownded! Stop her! Back water for the dear life, jontlemen! Miss Baby, will ye condeshend to take the hellum, or we'll all be shipwrecked! an' if I may make so bould, sir, (addressing Fin,) be plazed not to spake to the man at the hellum; it's agin all rules, an' more by token, bekaze av the intricacies av the passage.'

Kate gave up the rudder to Baby, apologizing at the same time to Kit, as well as her mirth would permit, for her careless steering.

And now, under the sober guidance of Baby, they are all landed at Ballacroogh — a beautifully wooded island at the further extremity of the loch, and immediately opposite the mouth of a small river, which, foaming and fuming down the hill-side, finally lost itself in the dark waters of the lake.

Kit took the first opportunity of whispering to Kate, loud enough to be heard by the rest of the party, that 'shure she steered a boat as well a'most as he himself, av people wouldn't be after spakin' so contin'ally to her.'

'There, Fin! put that in your pipe, my boy,' cried Archie.

'Indeed, Kit, it was all my fault; I'll behave better next time,' said Findon.

'Faith you will, a great deal better, for you'll take an oar; you have had your turn of the stern-sheets for to-day,' laughed his brother.

'Now then,' cried Archie, 'who's for the boat and who's for the shore? The boat will only hold two fishermen—one in the bow and one aft, with Kit amidships to manage her.'

'Is there no room for us, Archie?' asked Kate.

'One of you can go, if you like,—not both.'

'Which will you do, Baby?' said Kate.

'I would rather stay on shore; I should like to sketch those rocks where the river is foaming and tumbling about so; but I don't care if . . .'

'I had much rather go in the boat, and here I am,' said Kate, seating herself in the stern-sheets once more. 'Now who comes with me?'

After some polite sparring on the part of the brothers Fortescue, (for the best sport was duly announced by Kit to be had from the boat,) it was decided that Findon and Archie should accompany Kate; and that Fanshawe, taking charge of Baby, should fish from the island. Archie declared, that if Fanshawe had no sport he should change places with him; and, moreover, so mindful was he of his responsibilities, that he absolutely desired Kit to remain behind, ostensibly to assist Fanshawe, but in reality to 'chaperoon' Baby.

'Fin and I can manage the boat, and we shall be better without Kit; rather have his room than his company, if it's the same to you,' he said, in reply to Fanshawe, who politely objected to deprive them of Kit's services.

And so the party separated.

Kit conducted Fanshawe to the most approved cast for a salmon, out on a rock about twenty yards from the point, a spot easily reached by wading knee-deep.

There he placed and there he left him, Kit himself going on shore to collect fire-wood to cook the fish that were not yet caught, and to arrange a place for dinner under the shade of an old oak tree, which had sheltered many and many a pic-nic party before.

Baby seated herself upon the stump of a tree, at some distance from the fisherman, and commenced her sketch.

Fanshawe flogged the water with admirable patience for the space of twenty minutes, when, most unluckily, his fly-book fell into the loch, and as his flies were all wet, and his casting-lines would be spoilt, he was, of course, obliged to wade back to the shore to dry them; though why he could not have accomplished that feat on the rock where he stood, it might perhaps have puzzled him to explain.

Be that as it may, he came on shore, and being naturally of a communicative disposition, he joined Baby, and told her of his misfortunes: Baby sympathized very much with him: she immediately left off sketching, and helped him to repair damages, wiping the flies with her pocket-handkerchief, and re-arranging them when dry;' for Baby was a very good-natured girl, and was really sorry for Fanshawe's misfortune; and she did her utmost to enable him to begin fishing again as soon as possible.

But it would not do to run any risks with his flies; they must be well dried before they were shut up in the book again, or they would be spoilt, and this took a long time; and he thanked 'Miss Baby' for her kindness, and begged she would go on with her drawing; he was so sorry for having interrupted her! (how he could have the face to say so!) He would not be in her way much longer, if she would just permit him to remain until his book (how wet it was!) was quite dry.

Baby assured him he was not at all in her way. She was only afraid he would find it very stupid work watching her, for somehow or another she never could talk whilst she was drawing; but of course he might remain, if he liked. He did like, and it is to be inferred that he did not find the occupation of watching Baby so stupid as she had prognosticated, for the book and its contents had been dried over and over again, and still Fanshawe sat on.

Neither was Baby quite so taciturn as she had promised to be; she found her tongue in spite of her occupation.

At length steps are heard approaching; Fanshawe looks up and perceives Kit. Conscience-smitten, he begins to collect his flies, many of which still lie scattered about. 'Well, Miss Kindly, I will be off now and try my luck once more.'

'Yes, do Mr. Fortescue. I wish you could catch a salmon: there are plenty in the loch I know.'

'Plinty! Faix there *is* plinty, Miss Baby, it's thrue for ye: bud how can he catch one, an' he sittin' philanderin' in place of fushin'?'

Baby declared, with a laugh and a blush, that Mr. Fortescue had only just been drying his fly-book, which had fallen into the water; he had not been there long —which she really believed.

'Not been here long!' repeated the inexorable Kit. 'Faix, Miss Baby, he's been here an hour, if he's bin a minute; I see'd the Capt'in wadin' back.'

'All right, Kit,' cried Fanshawe, determined to interrupt his reminiscences at all hazards. 'Now then, come and show me a good cast. Have you seen any rise?'

'Sin anny rise! How could I 'sin anny rise,' sirr? an' I in the intarier of the island mindin' my own business? It 'ud be as well may be, av other folks did the same,' he muttered.

'I have been very idle I allow, Kit; but I mean to make up for it; I'll have a fish yet before dinner. What o'clock is it?'

'It's one o'clock, an' we dine at two puncshal; an' you've been more nor an hour sittin' . . .'

'By Jove, Kit! that was a rise. Look! you may see the circles yet.'

'Whist! Asy now, Capt'in. Don't show yourself, sirr, an' don't cast in a hurry; give him time; now throw above whar' he riz, an' let the fly float down fair an' asy over him.'

Fanshawe did as directed; but being an inexpert fisherman, his efforts by no means satisfied Kit, who was a first-rate performer.

'Shure, Capt'in,' cried Kit—(it may be as well, by-the-bye, to inform the reader that Archie and his two friends were all 'jolly Subs' in reality; but in Ireland a corporal's guard is 'the army,' and all subalterns are capt'in's)—'shure, Capt'in', you'll frighten every fush out of the loch if you flop your fly that a-way in the wather; divil a fush 'll stand it, an' small blame to 'em.'

Fanshawe laughed good-naturedly, and tried to do better.

And now, good manners inform us that it is high time we paid some sort of attention to Kate and her companions.

Archie, who knew the ground well, had pulled the boat above the spot where the river entered the loch, and had there anchored her, both by the stem and the stern, so that she lay broadside to the stream. Here was the best feeding ground; and, from the scientific position of the boat, both gentlemen, one 'for'ard,' the other 'aft,' had a good cast into the fresh, running water.

Archie could throw a fly as well as Kit himself, who had taught him; and Findon, though not quite so great a proficient, had managed to confute Archie's declaration of the morning, touching his inexperience, for not only did he rise several fish, but he caught them too.

Kate was delighted. She sat eagerly watching every cast, proclaiming each rise and successful 'strike' with a cry of joy; whilst every 'miss' or 'break away' was bemoaned with an exclamation of 'Oh, he's off! how sorry I am!'

She was also very busy landing the fish, which, not at all an easy matter, especially in a boat, she managed capitally.

'Come I call that pretty good sport!—six white trout and two salmon in less than two hours. Eh, Fin, my boy?'

'Capital sport indeed. I never caught a real salmon before—only a few grilse, and not many of them; and what very fine white trout these are, Archie!'

'Tol lol: we have bigger in the loch. I wonder what Fan has done?'

'Not much I guess; he is no great hand at fishing,' said Findon.

'Hark to the concaite of the jontleman now! Why, Fin, you wouldn't have caught a single fish had it not been for Kate. You never could have landed them yourself; now own the truth.'

'No I could not indeed. Miss Kindly had quite as much to do with my success as I had myself.'

'Oh, Mr. Fortescue! how can you say so? You played that salmon beautifully; now did he not, Archie?'

'It is quite true though, that I never would have landed him by myself; and I have to thank you for your most valuable and scientific assistance, Miss Kindly.'

'Come, come! draw it mild, Fin. You are worse than Kit with your three-deckers; though I must say Kate does understand the delicate operation of landing a fish as well or better than 'e'er a lady in the land.' But they've done rising now, which is a hint to leave off for the present. Some people won't take a hint, but go on flog, flog, flog from morning till night; there's common sense even in fishing if people only knew it. I'm for 'a blast of the dudheen,' what say you, Fin?'

'No thank you.'

'No thank you! why? Oh, I see. . . . Bless your heart! Kate likes it, don't you, my deary?'

'Yes I do indeed, Mr. Fortescue! I am not joking; I really like the smell of tobacco very much in the open air.'

Findon was a polite young man, and not accustomed to smoke in ladies' society, so he still hesitated; but upon Kate's threatening to be put on shore and thus relieve him from all scruples on her account, his modesty gave way and he lighted his cigar.

'So very bashful a young man I never did see!' said Archie, as he reclined at full length on the cushions aft, puffing a spiral column of grey smoke into the thin air. Why do you sit bolt upright in the bows there, Fin? Can't you tear yourself away from that salmon of yours?'

Findon moved nearer. He *did* feel more bashful than was his wont, and was never so afraid of doing what might possibly be disagreeable to a lady before. However, the feeling soon wore off, as he perceived how totally uncalled for it was; and the three laughed, and talked, and joked with all the zest and enjoyment of 'the merry days when we were young.' Kate's sparkling humour was in full force; her 'glorious grey eyes' (as Fin called them) flashed with fun at all

Archie's nonsense, and her merry laugh sounded clear and musical as a silver bell.

Presently a horn was heard from the island. Up started Archie. 'You don't mean to say it's two o'clock! Up anchor, Fin; come bear a hand, I'm as hungry as a hunter.'

'Why not say 'as a fisher,' Archie? But it's not two o'clock; it's only half-past one,' said Kate, looking at her watch.

'Oh, ho! I know what that means then; Fan has caught nothing, and Kit wants our fish to dress for dinner. In with the anchor at the bow, Fin; mine's in.'

'Yours! yes, I dare say,' gasped Findon, tugging away with all his might without moving the anchor an inch. 'Come and give us a lift, Giant.'

Archie stept 'for'ard,' and laying hold of the rope, (cable as Kit would have called it,) he gave so sudden and powerful a pull that the anchor came up with a jerk almost into the boat, and Archie himself, losing his balance, had a narrow escape of being precipitated into the water.

'Bad luck to you, Fin! you were near giving me a ducking; puffing out your cheeks and straining at nothing!'

'Straining at nothing! Look here, Miss Kindly, at what he calls 'nothing,'—half a ton of iron with a whole ton of mud in its clutches.'

'Archie is an ogre you know,' laughed Kate; 'he would pull up the bottom of the loch I really believe, if anything could grapple it.'

And now they are safely landed on Ballacroogh, and have handed over their fish to Kit, who commences immediately to cut up the finest salmon into steaks, for roasting on the arbutus skewers he had been busily preparing.

Whilst these interesting operations were going on, they sauntered towards the rock where Baby still sat sketching . . . 'With, I declare, that lazy fellow Fan by her side!' cried Archie. 'I'll be bound he has been there half the time, if the truth were known!'

'Well, Fan, what sport?' he called out as soon as they came within holloaing distance.

'None at all; I hadn't a rise.'

''A rise!' No, I should think not, unless a bit of Indian rubber or a paint brush rose at you. What did you expect to catch here, Fan, eh?'

'Oh! I have not been here all the time; I've . . .'

'Haven't you really? Ah, Fan! you'll never make a fisherman: come and look at our sport, my boy!'

'Well, Baby, and what have you been doing?' said Kate, 'let's see: how very pretty! Look, Mr. Fortescue; hasn't she done it nicely?'

'Yes, isn't it beautiful?' cried Fanshawe eagerly.

'It's not finished yet,' said Baby; artists always say that, if you ask to look at their work.

'What's that figure on the rock, Baby? a poetical license I suppose. No! I'll be hanged if I don't believe it's meant for Fan fishing, isn't it, Baby?' said Archie.

'Yes, that's meant for Mr. Fanshawe: his dark figure stood out well against the light on the water, so I took the liberty of putting him in.'

'Oh! you *have* been fishing after all then, Fan?' Archie observed maliciously.

'Fishing! I should think so. I flogged away till my arms ached. I only came on shore to dry my flies—my book fell into the water; and Miss Baby was kind enough to help me.'

'Oh!' said Archie, 'was she? Kind Miss Baby!'

'Av you plaze, leedies and jontlemen, the repast is prepeered av you plaze.'

'So am I,' cried Archie, 'never was better prepared in my life. Come along!' and away he strode.

'Make haste,' said Kate, 'Archie has got on his seven-leagued boots: he will eat everything before we get there.'

'Well done, Kit!' cried Archie, when they reached 'the banqueting tree,' as the old oak was called. 'Well done! you would make a capital commissary-general: roasted salmon and grilled trout; not to mention cold pigeon-pie, and lamb, and salad: how good everything looks!'

'You greedy fellow:' laughed Kate.

'Not a bit greedier than the rest of the party, my dear: you all think it and I say it, that's the whole difference: where's the porter, Kit?'

'Shure, Capt'in Archie, its whar it shud be, in the wather coolin'. Faix it's a poor commushry-gin'ral I'd be av I misremimbered to freeze the beer, sirr!'

'And the whiskey and the wine, Kit?'

'The whuskey's to the fore, Capt'in Archie, when ye require it; an' the wine's coolin' itself along wid the poorter: will I fetch a bottle o' wine, leedies?'

'To be sure, Kit! Wine, whiskey, porter; parade them all,' said Archie. He's hid 'the sperrit' somewhere now I'll be bound, for fear of accidents. Ah, Fin! Kit has found out your weakness 'that a-way' already: he's a 'cute un is Kit!'

'Look at him now,' said Kate, 'with his pockets and arms full of wet bottles: good old Kit! he doesn't care a bit whether he is wet or dry.'

'Not he! Do you see the water dripping out of the tails of his coat? Kit, you've broken a bottle; you'll be drownded with porter or wine, so you will.'

Kit stopt short; and setting down the bottles, he dipt his fingers into the dripping liquid, and deliberately sucked them.

'Divil a fear, Capt'in Archie Shure it's wather, and not wine, that's runnin' out av me pocket. Ould Kit knows better nor . . . Ah! it's makin' fun av me ye are! Faix, an' yer welcome! Why wouldn't ye?'

'Kit, you're a trump! and as soon as ever I find the whiskey, I'll give you a glass.'

'The whuskey is it, Capt'in? Shure it's in the holly av the ould tree itself behint ye. Whar else?'

'Ah, ha!' laughed Archie; 'that fish rose well at all events!'

Kit took no sort of notice of the base insinuation, but speedily produced 'the sperrits;' and being furnished with a glass of the same, tossed it off to the healths of the company.

'Here's wushin' yees ivery good in life, leedies! success, jontlemen! an' more power to *you*, sirr!' nodding towards Fanshawe.

All laughed at this hit at 'poor Fan,' who took it most good-humouredly; and, even when rallied by Archie on his awkwardness in dropping his fly-book into the water, preserved the same equanimity; and, moreover, could not be persuaded that the time occupied in drying his gear, was 'lost time.'

'How good-tempered he is!' thought Baby.

A rare and most excellent gift indeed is good temper. You acknowledge the excellence, but deny the rarity: you can call to mind a dozen good-tempered people in as many minutes; you think you are yourself a good-tempered man.

It is true that only last week you abused your grooms because your horse had thrown a shoe: it is true that you threatened to discharge your keeper, with oaths and maledictions, because poachers had made a clean sweep of Low-coppice, and escaped with their booty; but these outbursts are few and far between: in the main, you are a good-tempered man. My dear sir, you have ten thousand a-year, good health, and an affectionate wife; the world goes well with you; throwing a shoe and losing your pheasants, are about the only trials of temper to which you are subjected. I may be wrong; but I feel satisfied in my own mind, that were you as poor and sickly as I am, you would be quite as snappish.

'I hear oars,' said Archie. 'Who comes now?'

'Faix,' said Kit, as he peered out on the loch through the branches of the oak, 'it's 'the rough Ruts,' bad look to them!'

# CHAPTER VIII.

## ‘THE ROUGH RUTS.’

‘WHO are ‘the rough Ruts?’’ asked Findon Fortescue.

‘Oh,’ laughed Kate, ‘they are people who live near here, and have acquired that *soubriquet* by their rude, noisy manners. They are not coming surely, Archie, are they?’

‘I don’t know. Lie still all; our only chance is to keep close; they’ll land if they see us, of course.’

The whole party crowded down as low as possible, and remained perfectly silent.

The boat came nearer and nearer.

‘This puts me in mind of Pathfinder and Jasper ‘Eau Douce’ and Mabel Durham hiding from the Indians,’ whispered Kate.

‘Indians!—Indians are nothing to those fellows; better be scalped at once, and put out of one’s misery, than be bored to death by such . . . Hooray boys! they’re passing; they have not seen us!’

‘ Asy, Miss Kate! Lie still *acushla!* the ribbins av yer hat flutterin’ that a-way ull attrac’ the attintion av . . . Ah, I misdoubted it ’ud be so!’

As Kit spoke, the noise of oars ceased; the boat stopt for a moment, and then was pulled round, heading towards the island. It was evident they were discovered.

‘There, Kate, you have ‘been and done it!’ we have to thank you for the company of two of the most disagreeable fellows in Ireland; confound them! I could pitch them into the loch with all the pleasure in life, only I suppose it would not be polite.’

‘Not exactly so. Oh dear! how sorry I am! Never mind, it can’t be helped.’

‘ No, not now; but it might have been, if you could but have kept quiet, Kate, just half-a-quarter of a minute longer. Our fun is spoilt for the day. They will stick to us as ‘the old man of the sea’ did to Sinbad.’

‘ But Sinbad *did* get rid of him you know, Archie,’ suggested Baby.

‘ By making him drunk! a very good idea, Baby! we’ll try it with the Ruts; well done, Baby-bunting! I declare, for such a demure young lady, that is not so bad!’

Baby blushed and looked distressed, which Fanshawe, of course, perceiving, took pity on her, and began to be especially interested about these Ruts. ‘ What were they like? who were they? why were they disliked,’ &c. &c.

'Their name is 'legion' in this county,' said Archie. 'A large family of nobodies, who give themselves airs, and fancy themselves somebodies; that's who they are. What they are like, and why they are disliked, you will have an opportunity of judging only too soon: their boat has touched the shore.'

'Their weak point being 'my aunt Lady O'Neal of Knockdunder,' said Kate.

'Their strong point you mean, Kate,' said Archie.

'Hence their 'airs' I suppose,' said Fanshawe.

'Exactly so. An old aunt of the present generation of Ruts married an Irish Baron, a stroke of good fortune which entirely turned their heads at the time; and although it is at least forty years since that event took place, the said heads are still 'topsy-turvy' upon that peculiar subject. But here they are—the two worst of the lot—James and Richard.'

With much noise and uproar, the Messieurs Rut joined the party under the banqueting-oak.

James, the elder brother, was a stout, square-built man, of about thirty years, with a red face, a large head, and small twinkling eyes; his manner was abrupt always, rude often; his voice loud and dictatorial, owing to a firm conviction that he knew everything better than any one else; the tone of his conversation was in general of a contradictory character: Richard, the second brother, was taller and thinner than James, and equally disagreeable.

'We were as nearly as possible going by without seeing you,' said James Rut. 'I happened to catch sight of ribbons fluttering amongst the branches just in time; lucky, wasn't it?'

'Very'—'for you' was on the tip of Archie's tongue, but he magnanimously restrained any further advance of the words.

'Of course the luck is all on our side,' added Mr. Rut; 'the pleasure of meeting Miss Kate and Miss Baby, not to mention . . .'

'The bottled porter and the whiskey,' said Archie; 'come, take a glass, Rut.' He seemed seriously bent upon following out Baby's hint.

'Thank you; you have had no sport I suppose? What made you come out such a day as this?'

'What's the matter with the day? the wind is south-west, and . . .'

'No it isn't, it's north-west; at least it was ten minutes ago, when we pulled across the loch; wasn't it, Richard?'

'No,' said Richard, who never agreed with his brother by any chance.

Whereupon a loud angry discussion on the subject took place between them.

'Well,' said Archie at length, fairly tired out with their clamour, 'whilst you two are settling the points of the compass, I will go and have a throw for a white trout, though the sun's hardly low enough yet.'

'White trout! there are no white trout in *this* loch!' exclaimed James Rut immediately. This fresh opportunity of contradiction was too strong to be resisted, although he was tilting right 'in the wind's eye' with his brother.

'That's all you know about it,' said Archie, no longer able to be civil to the Ruts, try as he would.

'Know about it, Archie! I should think I ought to know Loch Croogh better than you, considering that I am some ten years older, and have lived within two miles of it all my life.'

'Look here, James, do you know a white trout when you see it?' said his brother, pulling one from under the wet rushes where Kit had deposited them, and placing it before his brother's eyes.

'That's not a white trout!' said James directly; 'not a regular sea-trout, I know better than that!'

'Well done, James Rut!' laughed Archie, 'you're yourself sure enough and no other; why not call it a mermaid at once? ha! ha! come along boys. Come, Fan! I'll show you a shady pool where I'll be bound you'll raise a dolphin!'

'And well done, Archie Kindly!' roared James Rut, 'you are yourself, and nobody else too! You can throw a long line, Mr. Archie, I know, but 'tis plain you can draw a much longer bow; who ever heard of a dolphin in Loch Croogh?'

'Well *we* call them salmon to be sure; but I thought that *you* might perhaps fancy them of the dolphin species.'

There was a general laugh at this hit of Archie's. All seemed to enjoy it except (strange to say) James Rut himself, who, turning still redder than common, said, 'Oh—ah—very witty, I dare say!'—after which he remained unusually silent for the space of ten minutes, but for no longer; his '*amour propre*' was made of toughish stuff—it might be bent for a bit, but take off the strain, and it would speedily jerk back into its customary bold and barefaced attitude.

'It's no use, Kate! I can't help it; I know what you are going to say—'evil communications corrupt good manners,' I suppose, for I am always rude with 'the rough Ruts,' especially with James,' said Archie to his sister, as they strolled away, followed by the others.

'I know, Archie dear, it *is* difficult to be civil to people who snap at and contradict every word one says; I often find it hard enough myself; but still—but still—we must try—must we not?'

'Yes I suppose so; by-the-bye, did you see how the brothers Fortescue stared at the flat contradictions of James, and the equally sharp rejoinders of Richard? I couldn't help laughing at their looks of astonishment; the Brothers are very polite and particular gentlemen indeed, and they did not at all understand the boisterous manners and loud voices of 'the Roughs,' particularly in the presence of ladies.'

''The Brothers,' as you call them, are gentlemen, and of course know how to behave in the society of ladies, which no Rut ever did. How nice they are, Archie; Baby and I like them so much.'

'Yes ain't they? I knew you would like them; they are the best tempered fellows in the world, always ready to do any thing with any body: good-looking too, don't you think so?'

'Oh yes! very; more than good-looking; Baby and I think them both so handsome.'

It would be unsatisfactory to depict the remaining incidents of the day, for we have seen that discord had become an ingredient in them.

The arrival of the Ruts had indeed (as Archie had prognosticated) completely spoilt their fun.

Loud talking and rude contradiction, boisterous manners, conceit and ignorance, fairly drove the quiet, gentlemanlike Fortescues from the field. They were thoroughly disgusted with 'the rough Ruts,' being unaccustomed to such rude behaviour in civilized society; they therefore (much to the chagrin of the sisters, who did not at all admire the change) devoted themselves entirely to fishing for the remainder of the evening, thus leaving Kate and Baby to the tender mercies of the Messieurs Rut.

Archie was enjoying great sport; as the sun set the trout rose freely; but in compassion to his sisters he good-naturedly gave up, and proposed a return to Ballyblunder sooner than was otherwise intended.

The Ruts were asked to accompany them; but they were unfortunately engaged to 'my aunt Lady O'Neal,' and must be off to Knockdunder immediately.

The repose and quiet, attendant on their absence, was duly appreciated by the whole party: for some time no one spoke; presently Kate, who never liked a lengthened silence, drew a long breath and said,—

'Dear me! dear me! what a relief is this quiet and calm: such a lovely evening too!'

'An agreeable contrast to the roar of 'the Ruts,' eh, Kate?' said Archie with a laugh.

'Yes, they really are insupportable; worse than ever, I think.'

There was no response to this observation; 'the Ruts' were dropt, and other topics introduced.

The row home had a beneficial effect upon the spirits of the whole party.

The calm, warm evening; the glowing sunset; the rippling at the boat's bows, as she lazily pushed her way through the still water; all combined to soothe the feelings and restore harmony to the thoughts which had been shaken and jarred by the too rude contact with loud and noisy discord; and when they arrived at Ballyblunder, all disagreeable incidents in the day's proceedings were forgotten, and the pleasant ones alone remembered and dwelt upon.

It were well were it always thus, through life as through a day.

And yet how few there be who do not magnify each small stumbling-block of offence which rises up (as rise it will), into a huge rock over which to break the shins and lose the temper.

Stoop down, sir, and roll the impediment out of your way; it is far better than railing at it, believe me.

The courses of the two boats crossing Loch Croogh at the same moment, were not more apart, than were the thoughts, the feelings, and the words of their respective occupants: in the one, peace, quiet, gentle voices, and pleasant smiles prevailed; in the other, wrangling, noise, and contention.

* * * *

Long after the ladies of Ballyblunder had retired to rest, the brothers Fortescue sat up talking of them.

## CHAPTER IX.

### CONTAINING SUBJECTS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL.

'SO 'my aunt Lady O'Neal' dines here to-day does she, mother mine?' said Archie, between vast mouthfuls of broiled salmon.

'Yes, Archie, and her two nieces . . .'

'Not the two Rut girls!'

'Yes the two Rut girls.'

'Oh, mother! how could you?'

'Oh, Archie! how couldn't I; they are staying at Knockdunder you know.'

'And so are their brothers James and Richard. Have you invited them too?'

'I have invited one; I really cannot stand those two together oftener than I am obliged to do.'

'Well! Come, that is something gained however: I like 'the Lady of the Lake,' she is capital fun; but as to the girls, they are a great nuisance always, especially Jane.'

'For shame, Archie, to speak so of young ladies!

Besides I don't believe you think exactly as you speak. He was a great admirer of Jane Rut's once upon a time, Mr. Fortescue,' said Mrs. Kindly turning to Findon.

'That was before I knew any one else, mother! I was young in those days and of a very verdant hue all over. Jane Rut took advantage of my youth and inexperience, opened her great blue eyes at me whenever we met (which, by-the-bye, she always contrived to fill with tears at our parting), and finally by other arts that I will not stop to enumerate, she fairly—no, most unfairly, captured my tender heart and inflicted a pang no time . . .'

'Be quiet, Archie, I will not have you speak in that way even of Jane Rut; though I believe she deserves it, for she is older than you and certainly did flirt with you most outrageously.'

'Of course she did, mother, and with everyone else too, and so she will now with the brothers Fortescue as sure 'as eggs is eggs.''

'Archie, how vulgar you are getting; where did you pick up all those horrid expressions?'

'In the army, my dear Kate, and chiefly through the instrumentality of my friends Fin and Fan. Before I joined the army I was a most polite and gentle-mannered youth; now I own . . .'

'I am sure you could not have learnt that kind of thing from either of the Mr. Fortescues; they never utter a word of the sort,' cried Kate eagerly.

'Bless your innocent heart, that's all you know about it, is it? They haven't come out yet. Wait till their company manners are rubbed off and you'll see.'

There was a general smile at this observation.

'I am afraid,' said Mrs. Kindly, addressing 'the Brothers,' that you are not prepossessed in favour of our neighbours by the specimen you had yesterday. The Ruts are certainly not a fascinating family; but you will like their aunt Lady O'Neal better than her nephews, though she is rather noisy and dictatorial too; but then she is an old lady and has more right to lay down the law.'

'I like Lady O'Neal chiefly because she is the only person who keeps 'the rough Ruts' in any kind of order,' said Archie. 'It does one good to see the way in which she sets James Rut down.'

'Who is 'the Lady of the Lake?' I think I heard that name applied to some one,' said Findon.

''The Lady of the Lake' is Lady O'Neal,' said Mrs. Kindly. She lives on the opposite side of Loch Croogh, and has lived there ever since her marriage, which must be forty years ago. She used to be seen paddling herself about in an Indian canoe, morning, noon, and night, during the summer, and was consequently christened 'the Lady of the Lake.''

'She is often on the loch now, mama, and though she never rows herself, she always steers.'

'Ah! but twenty years ago, when we first came here, she used to pull as good an oar as you do, Archie,' said Mr. Kindly. 'What a fine, handsome woman she was then! was she not, Mary?'

'Yes indeed, and so she is still for a woman of sixty. She must be nearly that I think, William?'

'She is fifty-eight, my love; she was eighteen when she married Lord O'Neal. I like Lady O'Neal, and always did; and though, as you say, she is rather noisy (she would be no Rut if she were not), still she is very agreeable, clever, and thoroughly good-tempered.'

'And browbeats James Rut beautifully,' said Archie.

'Which seems to be her greatest merit in your eyes, Archie,' replied his father.

'It is, sir, I confess; I can do a bit that way myself occasionally, but Lady O'Neal beats me into fits at it.'

'Lady O'Neal has a right to keep her nephews in order; you have not.'

'I know that, sir, and I really do my best to avoid an outbreak; but human nature is human nature, and James Rut tries mine beyond endurance sometimes.'

'He is very provoking and very rude I own; but that is no reason that you should be rude too, Archie, remember that.'

'And the Misses Rut,' said Fanshawe, 'may we not have a description of them?'

'Certainly,' said Kate; 'Jane, the eldest (Archie's friend you know), is a tall, fair girl, with thin yellow hair and large blue eyes; she thinks she is clever, but she is really only pert, brave, and . . .'

'What do you mean by 'brave,' Kate?' said Archie.

'I mean that she is not afraid of saying whatever comes uppermost, which most girls are, and is unabashed under rebuffs, which most girls are not.'

'Very good: go on.'

'Then she is a very lively young lady; talks a good deal; and . . . that is all I shall say of her. Doubtless you will find out any other peculiarities she may have when you become acquainted with her.'

'She talks a good deal and she flirts a good deal, that is what Kate means,' laughed Archie.

'And her sister,' persisted Fanshawe, 'is she equally attractive?'

'No,' said Archie. 'She is not so good-looking: she is taller, darker, thinner, and sallower; but I like her the best. Bessy is really rather clever; and now and then says odd things that make one laugh.'

'Oh yes Bessy is by far the best,' said Kate; 'and much more really good-natured than Jane.'

'Six of one and half-a-dozen of the other as to that,' said Archie. 'Who else is coming, mother?'

'Major O'Grady and Mrs. Burke.'

'Hooray! I'm glad of that, they are both capital fun. Now, I'll just describe those parties for the benefit of Fin and Fan: Mrs. Burke is a disconsolate widow of the mature age of fifty, at the least penny,' isn't she, mother?'

'Yes I should think quite that.'

'Well, notwithstanding and nevertheless, she would have no objection to try her luck once more in the matrimonial lottery, gainsay it who may. She is a little body with a remarkably good figure, which she is constantly displaying to the best advantage, by attitudinizing about in a way peculiar to ladies with good figures, especially if there happen to be a pier-glass in the room. Her face is naturally the contrary to attractive, but she ogles, and simpers, and makes eyes to admiration, so that her natural countenance is seldom seen; she has also . . .'

'Oh! Archie,' said Baby, 'you are making her out too bad!'

'Not a bit; I am merely drawing an exact likeness, not a flattering one, which means no likeness at all; mine is a true photograph before the paint is put on, which invariably destroys the portrait. She has also 'the gift of the gab' strongly developed, and is, without any exception, the vainest woman I ever saw in my life. Oh, there is one more characteristic, she is perpetually talking of the strength of her feelings, and of 'poor dear Harry,' her late husband, by which I infer that she has little or no feeling, and did not care much for her 'irreparable loss.' '*Au reste*,' as Kate says, I will leave you to find it out.'

'I rather like that description,' said Fanshawe, 'Mrs. Burke must be a most amusing person.'

'She is, very; and now for the O'Grady—he's 'a broth of a boy!''

'Now, Archie, no abuse of Major O'Grady, he is a great favourite of mine.'

'Abuse, mother! why I'm as fond of the O'Grady as you are; he's a capital fellow, but he has his peculiarities you must allow.'

'Yes, he is fond of horse-dealing, whiskey-punch, and blarney, I admit; but he is as kind-hearted and good-natured a creature as ever lived, and very entertaining.'

'Especially with Mrs. Burke, who makes love to him to his face; they are capital fun, those two, I am so glad you have invited them.'

'I have invited them out of civility, and not for you to make fun of, Archie; so I desire you will behave yourself properly.'

'Oh yes, I'll behave myself properly, dear mama,' said Archie, speaking in a doleful voice, and trying to look subdued; 'when the Major listens with the grave side of his face to Mrs. Burke's affectionate inquiries after his health, and winks out of the laughing side at us, I'll not move a muscle—that is, if *you* don't, mother—is that a bargain?'

Mrs. Kindly laughed. 'Well no, I cannot exactly promise; the Major's two faces, as you call them, are so absurd it's impossible to help smiling a little.'

'Well done, mother! that's a pretty good admission I think.'

'But, Archie, you are always contriving to get up these absurd scenes between Mrs. Burke and the Major; I will not allow that, it makes Mrs. Burke look so very ridiculous, at her age too.'

'Oh, she requires no assistance of mine to make her look ridiculous, mother, an old woman of more than fifty! I have no patience with her presuming to flirt and to throw 'sheep's eyes' at people.'

'Talking of sheep's eyes,' said Mr. Kindly, 'there were more sheep killed last night.'

'You don't say so, sir!' exclaimed Archie.

'Yes I do, but not on our mountains; on O'Grady's.'

'How long has this sheep-killing been going on, Mr. Kindly?' asked Findon.

'For about two years;—they were fined heavily for the outrages committed last year; over two thousand pounds I think it was, for the sheep-killing, and for the extra police consequently required; I had hoped that the punishment would have been sufficient to have deterred them from committing further outrages, but it seems I was mistaken, for they are at it again this summer.'

'Have the police taken no one, sir,' said Findon.

'Not as yet; most of the police sent down were Roman Catholics, and many of them known to have been Ribbonmen; of course they winked at the sheep-killing. It is stated as a fact, that parties used to meet night after night, under the very noses of the police, when they supped off mutton and concocted fresh plans, but the police could neither see nor hear them.'

'I thought they never took the sheep away, sir, but left them where they fell,' said Archie.

'So they do now, Archie, in general; but at first they stole as well as killed them; they are rather afraid of using them for food since two men were convicted, and one transported for receiving sheep, or mutton rather, knowing it to be stolen.'

'But can't you get the police changed, sir?' said Findon; 'surely a representation to Dublin Castle would effect that much.'

'I despatched a letter yesterday to the Castle for that very purpose, but I am doubtful if I shall get what I want. As long as the Executive in Ireland chooses to be guided by the words and wishes of the priests, it is hopeless to expect justice for Ireland, or tranquillity in the county.'

''Justice for Ireland' is the old O'Connell cry, sir,' remarked Fanshawe.

'Yes and I adopt the cry; but I fancy that he and I do not mean quite the same thing. What O'Connell meant all know, for he made no secret of it. 'The Repeal of the Union and Catholic supremacy, both in spiritual and temporal matters,'—that was O'Connell's idea of 'Justice for Ireland.' . . . My idea is far less magnificent, but would, I think, if carried into effect, be far more practically useful. It is simply what the words express in their strict integrity—justice—equal justice; I demand that the laws of the land be administered without respect to persons or creeds—that is all I ask—it is all that is necessary—for could justice only be obtained, the rest would follow as a matter of course. If people found that those who broke the law were sure to be punished by the law, whether priest or layman, Catholic or Protestant, they would think twice before they set it at defiance, which now they do with comparative, and their aiders and abettors—the priests—with complete, impunity.'

'Oh you attribute the sheep-killing to the priests do you, sir?'

'I do not say that they originated the sheep-killing, but I do say that they defend it, and that publicly.'

'How is that, sir? If it would not be giving you too much trouble I should like to know more on this subject,' said Findon; his brother also begged for information.

'I will tell you all about it with great pleasure,' replied Mr. Kindly.

'As soon as the police-tax was imposed upon the town-lands where the outrages were committed (for the purpose, you understand, of paying for the extra police required), and the presentment for compensation for property destroyed had been allowed at the assizes, and the amount of fine fixed; the Roman Catholic priests issued an address to 'the benevolent and charitable Christian,' setting forth the starving state and utter destitution of the poor perishing people, and soliciting aid. In that address there was not one word of truth from beginning to end, which has been proved by the Commission of Enquiry, instituted by the Poor-Law Commissioners, and carried into effect by the Board of Guardians of the disturbed districts. So far from the people in those districts being in a state of want and destitution, it appeared that they were in more prosperous circumstances than they ever had been, in spite of the late heavy fines, amounting (as I have before said) to upwards of two thousand pounds; but the falsehoods so industriously circulated by the priests, although officially contradicted, doubtless imposed on many.'

'What was their object, sir, in propagating these falsehoods?' asked Findon.

'To enable the people to pay the extra police-tax and the compensation for property destroyed of which I told you; and to create a bad feeling against the landlords, which, I am sorry to say, the priests in these parts never miss an opportunity of doing. But I was going to tell you how it is we know that one of the priests at all events defends the sheep-killing. J. Hogan, P.P., writes to the editor of one of the priests' papers (the most fitting name for that description of journal), thanking him for money received in aid of the starving peasantry. He adds: 'You have gallantly stood forward to do battle for the persecuted Celt *in maintaining their right to the free commonage of the mountains, in their possession from time immemorial.*' Then after a dose of blarney to the editor, Father Hogan says, 'and to think that this old race will be uprooted, *to make room for Scotch and English hoggets, is a maddening thought truly* . . . it is the duty of every honest and patriotic man to assist *in shackling the power* of the landlords, not only in * * * but in Ireland.' '*

'That is too bad for anything,' exclaimed the brothers Fortescue simultaneously.

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* Fact, the name of the Priest excepted.

'It is. The people maintain their right to the free commonage of the mountains by killing the sheep, and this Father Hogan says they have a right to do—there you see the priestly policy laid bare; their object is simple and as simply declared,—a Roman Catholic priest may say or do anything he pleases; he is without the pale of the law, above it in short, as was pretty clearly proved the other day at that mock trial in Dublin. No one doubted that both those reverend gentlemen had been guilty of the most gross and barefaced attempt to intimidate the electors with regard to their votes, but neither did any one imagine for a moment that they would be convicted. What Roman Catholic would dare to find his priest *guilty?* As it is, justice is laughed to scorn, priestly influence prevails, and outrages are committed with impunity.'

'Why does Government permit such a state of things I wonder, when the remedy is so simple,' said Archie.

'The answer to your question is just as simple; because the minister prefers Place to Patriotism. He dare not offend the Catholic party in the House for fear it should turn against him upon some Government measure and place him in a minority. So well do the priests understand this and so certain are they of immunity in doing wrong, that they do not even condescend to disguise their evil deeds. They curse the people from the tops of walls; they publish their approval of outrages and the destruction of property in newspapers, and they are not meddled with; but then the Catholic party in the House of Commons is satisfied, and the minister keeps his place.'

'It strikes me,' said Archie, 'that 'Mother Church' beats 'Mother Hubbard' into fits in the shrew line.'

'For shame, Archie!' said Mrs. Kindly, though she could not help smiling, 'you should not turn the Church into ridicule.'

'Not *our* Church, mother dear! and as for the Roman Catholic Church, it fulminates curses upon my devoted head, and I laugh at it for its pains. Surely laughing is better than cursing any day of the week, eh, mama?'

'I'll box your ears if you make me laugh when I want to be grave, Archie; be quiet!'

'I'm dumb but not deaf, and consequently I hear a sound you cannot hear. Come in!' he called aloud.

The door of the room was pushed gently open, and the figure of Kit made visible upon the threshold.

'Av you plaze, Capt'in Archie, there's a gran' breeze on the wather, an' a big black cloud is comin' up, an' we will have rain afore long, sirr, more by token the troots is risin' like mad this minute, as I come from the loch, an' so I thought your honour . . .'

'Oh! by the powers, let's be off boys!' cried Archie, jumping up. 'I vote for an adjournment of the House, dismiss the Catholic question, and hey for the 'troots!''

'Av you plaze, Master Archie—that is Capt'in—bad manners to me tongue! I met Father Hogan at the loch side, an' only he war me shpiritual shuparior I'd a throwed him into the wathur; for he said, sez he, 'So Kit Kelly, you're idlin' your time away doin' nothin' as ushal I see; bad look to yees for a skulkin' vagabone! av yees had the sperrit of a man you'd quit the tyranisin', grindin' Kindlys who work ye all like slaves, an' spen' their own time in fushin' an' such like fooleries; you'd quit them I say, an' join your fellow-countrymen in strivin' to dhrive them tyrints an' oppresshors intil the say.' Bad look to me, bud he said that, sirr.'

'He did!' exclaimed Archie feigning great wrath.

'Faix, he did so; bud I up an' tould him,—'Father Hogan,' sez I, 'Mr. Kindly is no tyrint an' no oppresshor, there is more clothes an' more food guv to the poor from Ballyblunder in a week, than your riverence guv in your life, manin' no offince, your riverence.' Wid that he shakes his fust at me, and sez he, 'You sacrilujus dog, how dare you spake to your priest so! bud I know how it is, that big, young fool, Archie Kindly, puts ye up till all this insholent conduc';' an' wid that he shtrode aff wid himself.'

'He said *that* did he? He called me a big, young fool did he? By all the saints in the calendar, from Nebuchadnezzar to Friar Tuck, but I'll be avenged on that insolent priest, Kit Kelly! Christopher Kelly bring Father Hogan before me.'

'Ah shure, Capt'in Archie!' said Kit, awed at being addressed as Christopher, 'shure he's away, an' more nor that, the likes o' him isn't worthy yer honour's notice.'

'I'll be revenged I say,' exclaimed Archie, striding out of the room. 'I'll pursue—I'll overtake—I'll tear him to pieces—I'll—I'll—

> 'Bait my hook with Hogan's tail,
> And sit upon a rock and bob for whale!''

'Ah! don't now, Capt'in, Masther Archie dear, don't ye do nothin' o' the sort; shure the man's not wuth it;' and Kit followed him, quite alarmed at these terrible threatenings against Father Hogan, and sorry he had said a word about what had passed.

'Muscha, muscha! the Capt'in will kill him as shure as paes is paes; he'll deshtroy the holy man; bad look to him for a foul-mouthed gomeril! shpakin' agin the family that a-way! . . .'

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE DINNER PARTY.

KATE and Baby were dressed and down early, to finish decorating the drawing-room with flowers,—this was always their peculiar occupation and pleasure. Whilst thus busily engaged, talking and laughing merrily the while; unperceived by them the door was gently opened, and 'the Brothers' stood on the threshold.

They gazed in silent delight upon the two fair girls.

How graceful! how lovely they were!—Now leaning forward to give the finishing touch to a well-filled vase, now bending back to survey their handiwork; the rounded arm, the perfect form, the saucy smile, the merry words, the sparkling eyes; hands full of brilliant flowers in beautiful and harmonious contrast with the pure white dress and dark glossy hair—what a '*tableau vivant!*'

How exquisite a group!—all sweet, fresh, beautiful, joyous nature—the girls and the flowers—redolent of innocence and love; of youth and happiness.

Love and happiness!—did the combination strike 'the Brothers?' Who can say?

The light in their eyes and the colour in their cheeks, as they advanced into the room, proclaimed that some unusual sensation was moving within, for never is there an effect without a cause, though that cause may be invisible to mortal eye.

'What beautiful flowers! and what a quantity!' said Findon. 'May we help you? only tell us what to do.'

'Thank you very much,' said Kate. 'If you will gather up all the old flowers and the rejected new ones, and all those stalks and leaves . . . thank you, put them in the basket please.'

They did as they were bid, and soon 'the litter' was cleared away, and the room pronounced to be fit for company.

'The room is decorated, but we are not,' said Fanshawe; 'you have each a red rose in your hair, may we not have at least a stalk in our button-hole?'

The girls laughed and blushed slightly, as they presented a clove-carnation, embedded in a cup-shaped geranium leaf, to each of 'the Brothers.'

'We had not forgotten you,' said Kate.

'The price of our service,' said Findon.

'Not at all; see! they are tied together, already prepared for you before we knew that we should be honored by your assistance.'

'The Brothers' expressed their gratitude for the sweet gift.

'The most delicious of all scents to my mind is the perfume of a clove-carnation,' observed Findon.

'It smells as if it were good to eat,' said Fanshawe.

'Then eat yours, Fan,' laughed his brother.

'No thank you, it would spoil my dinner: besides, I don't like eating live things; I will keep it till it withers and dies, and then, perhaps, who knows what may happen to it?'

He glanced at Baby as he tried vainly to adjust his flower in his coat; their eyes met for a moment and only for a moment; Baby looked confused, Fanshawe felt so.

Why had that rapid glance into each other's eyes so affected them? why did a thrilling, tingling sensation, alike novel and delightful, course through their veins?

'Miss Baby,' said Fanshawe, desperately breaking silence, 'would you kindly lend me a pin? I am spoiling my beautiful carnation.'

Baby came forward pin in hand; he took it and transfixed most successfully the stalk of his flower, not only into his coat, but into his thumb.

'Oh what an awkward dog I am!' he cried, 'how difficult it is to pin anything.'

'Except one's thumb, Fan,' laughed Findon.

'I tell you what, Fin, it's no laughing matter, it hurts uncommonly,' replied Fanshawe with his wounded thumb in his mouth.

'Shall I help you, Mr. Fanshawe,' asked Baby timidly.

She could not have said why, but she would have been glad had her offer been declined.

'Thank you, I should be so much obliged to you,' was the grateful answer.

Baby approached; how her hand trembled as she took the flower, and how deeply she blushed as she fastened it to his coat! Yesterday she would neither have blushed nor trembled, but would have pinned twenty carnations all over him, with the merry laugh of careless, happy girlhood; and all this embarrassment, flutter, and confusion were the offspring of a glance.

His spirit had spoken to hers; like a flash of lightning the electric spark passed into her soul. Oh the revelation of that flash of light!

Friendship—regard—esteem—admiration—paled before the burning lustre of—love. . . . She should not have known—should not have recognized the feeling do you say? She, a girl of such tender age, could not at once have taken to her heart the fluttering wings of 'the god-boy.'

Young she was—innocent she was—and guileless of evil thought, word, or deed, as an erring daughter of sinful mortal man can be; but also she was a woman . .

Mrs. Kindly entered the room; she marked her daughter's flushed face and the light in Fanshawe's eyes; she glanced at the other pair, they were standing at the open window in merry talk, but their backs were towards her.

'I wonder whether I ought to interfere' she thought.

They are all so happy, it seems a pity to interrupt them; and yet, who knows? . . How pretty the girls look; no wonder those boys (they are really little better) admire them. *They* are good-looking too; not half so handsome as my Archie though, and here he comes. Where's your father, Archie?'

'In the cellar, madam, hunting out (I sincerely hope) a magnum or two from a certain bin designated A. No. 1, containing Lafitte of the vintage of . . .'

'How dreadfully greedy men are to be sure,' said his mother interrupting him.

Greedy, mama! you mistake me; you do me injustice—bitter, bitter injustice; and when I am gone,' . . . . he took out his pocket-handkerchief. 'It is not for myself that I yearn for the contents of bin A. No. 1,—perish so selfish a thought! No! but for my friends: my Fin, my Fan, my Major, my widow, my ogling Jane, and my jawing Jim (excuse the coarseness of the epithet). Yes, chiefly on James Rut's account I coveted the ancient and time-honoured Lafitte. Hush! here he is; no it's my father.'

'I have only just saved my distance,' said Mr. Kindly; our friends are arriving, I heard the wheels as I crossed the hall.'

The door opens.

'Lady O'Nale, an' Miss Rut, an' Miss Bessy Rut, an' Misther James Rut, me lady,' was proclaimed in an audible voice by Con Cavan, the old white-haired butler, who always insisted on calling his mistress 'me lady' when there was company; Mrs. Kindly, being the daughter of a peer, fully entitled her to rank with the highest in the land in Con's estimation.

Major O'Grady soon followed.

He was a stout, fat-faced man, with a decided brogue, and from the humorous expression in his eye, it was evident he was no enemy to wit or whiskey, fun or frolic.

'Faith I'm glad I am not the last, I was afraid I would be,' said the Major, when told that Mrs. Burke was expected. 'You should let a body know, Mrs. Kindly, when the Widow Burke dines with you, it would be as good as half-an-hour's grace any way.

'Mrs. Burke is sometimes a little late certainly, but I dare say she will soon be here,' said Mrs. Kindly.

'The late Widow Burke! ha! ha!' laughed the Major, 'faith that's just what she would like to be, and small blame . . . whist, boys! here's herself.'

And sure enough, through the wide opened door, sailed in a mass of flowers and white muslin, of enormous width, but of insignificant height. The effect was striking, but not graceful; the little head peeping out from the midst of a heap of inflated garments, reminded one irresistibly of a pen-wiper.

'So sorry to have been delayed; hope I have not kept you waiting; but I am not *very* late am I? Dear me! surely your clocks are fast, Mrs. Kindly, are they not?'

Thus apologizing, mincing, and dancing on her toes across the room, Mrs. Burke advanced towards her smiling and polite hostess.

At dinner the roses and carnations were on opposite sides of the table; for 'the Brothers' had been 'told off' (in military parlance) with Mrs. Burke and Jane Rut; but inasmuch as a 'vis-a-vis,' is, by universal consent, accounted the next best position to 'side-by-side,' and as the carnations confronted the roses, they were content; if they could not converse as much as they wished, they could look and admire with impunity.

James Rut made several attempts to monopolize the conversation, but fortunately for those present, each attempt was rendered abortive by his aunt, who invariably pulled him up short, before he had well got under weigh. Archie, feeling that he really could not do this himself at his father's table (though itching to be at him), rubbed his hands in the intensity of his satisfaction, and asked Lady O'Neal to drink wine three separate times, which hospitable attentions were graciously acceded to.

Mrs. Burke could never sit by a good-looking young man for five minutes, without 'making eyes' at him. She had commenced flirting at fifteen and she continued to flirt at fifty; you might as well have attempted to prevent an habitual drunkard from drinking, as Mrs. Burke from flirting.

But Findon was unconscious of her ogling glances and simpering speeches.

He said 'yes indeed,' 'no indeed,' and 'really,' at stated intervals; but his eyes were the whole time fixed on the picture of Monk, which hung over the fire-place exactly behind Kate's chair, and his thoughts evidently followed his eyes. Mrs. Burke was disgusted with his want of taste.

'Are you fond of dogs, Mr. Fortescue?' she said, 'you seem very much taken with Monk's portrait.'

This was a simple, common-place question, which you would suppose could embarrass no one; yet, strange to say, confusion was plainly visible on Findon's countenance, and stranger still, on Kate's also.

'Fond of dogs, Mrs. Burke; oh yes! very.'

Mrs. Burke stared at him with astonishment; what made him get so red and look so silly? She could not understand it at all; perhaps he had once had a favorite dog that had come to an untimely end, and perhaps his name had been 'Monk' too—yes, very likely that was it.

Jane Rut had very white, even teeth, and a particularly pretty, well-shaped little hand; and Fanshawe must have been exceedingly witty and amusing that day at dinner; to judge by the constant smiles and laughter of the fascinating Jane, and the frequent uplifting of the pretty little hand, expressive of astonishment or pleasure at the entertaining remarks of her neighbour.

But Fanshawe could neither be laughed into loquacity nor gesticulated into jests; to own the truth, he was unusually silent, and stupidly unobservant of 'the manual exercise' so artistically performed, for his sole benefit and consideration.

His abstracted mood was at length observed; the merry laugh ceased, the white teeth glittered no more, the pretty hand no longer flourished aloft in graceful and attractive pantomime, but rested quietly and unconsciously on the table (close to Fanshawe's plate), the delicate taper fingers and almond-shaped nails showing to great advantage by the side of a muscular hand embrowned by the sun and hardened by exercise.

Oh, Jane Rut! Jane Rut! 'tis vain to 'scoon' from out the corners of those liquid eyes, snatching back thy glance in maiden modesty when well assured of its success; yes, that look was noticed. He smiles! surely an answering smile plays upon his lips. Well may'st thou turn thy blushing face away, Jane Rut, but only for a moment, one moment of soft soliloquy, and again 'tis raised, and now the full battery of the large blue eyes is suddenly unmasked.

Fanshawe smiles; but alas! his eyes are fixed upon the carnation in his coat.

'Those rascals still continue sheep-killing, Kindly, I'm told' observed the Major, determined not to see Mrs. Burke's attempts to attract his attention, having failed in obtaining that of Findon.

'Yes they do indeed, I am sorry to say, O'Grady.'

'It's too bad, a great deal too bad, upon my life it is, Kindly; how will we ever stop these outrages?'

'It will be very difficult as long as the priests are against us.'

'But do you really think, sir, that the priests are against you in this instance?' asked James Rut, ripe for argument.

'I *know* they are, James; they have openly in the public newspapers advocated the right of the tenants to the commonage of the mountains, and denounced us (the landlords) as tyrants and oppressors for letting these said mountains; thus exonerating the sheep-killers from all blame, and inciting them to fresh outrages.'

'Well but is it quite certain that you landlords *have* the right of commonage there? I was told the other day that you had not.'

'Who told you, Rut?' said the Major.

'Who told me? Why let me see, several people were talking about it, I can't quite remember who it was exactly, but . . .'

'I remember who it was exactly, James; it was Priest Hogan, I heard him;' said Lady O'Neal sharply, with evident signs of impatience and anger gathering in her formidable countenance.

'Father Hogan, aunt? no I don't think it was; at least I am sure some one else said so too, and—and . . .'

'Pooh, pooh! you have got into a dreadful habit of stammering and stuttering, James, which is entirely owing to your talking of things you don't understand, or *won't* understand; which is it?'

'I understand this, Aunt O'Neal, at all events, that every one is against the poor Roman Catholic priests now; they can't do right do what they will, yet I am sure they are very charitable,—they have given away no end of blankets, and warm clothing, and meat, and . . .'

'You are talking nonsense, James Rut,' replied his aunt severely, bending her massive brows upon her luckless nephew.

Lady O'Neal, when very much vexed, had the habit of contracting her brows into an awful frown, the 'ridge and furrow' look, Archie called it.

James Rut was never proof against this portentous frown, he was silenced at once, struck dumb; but he still continued to mutter inaudibly what he dared not speak aloud, and his heightened colour and twinkling eyes plainly denoted the state of commotion within. To be snubbed publicly in this way before two strangers! it was insufferable; but then his aunt was very irascible, it would not do to excite her; and very old, it would not be respectful to contradict her; and very rich, it would not do to offend her.

'James,' said she, partly mollified by his silence, but with her fierce eyes still fixed on his hot and uncomfortable countenance, 'James do you never read the papers?'

'Yes every day'—(sulkily).

'Did you ever read a speech of Priest Hogan's, in which he denied the right of the landlords of these parts to their own mountains?'

'Ye-e . . .'

'Don't stammer, man! yes or no?'

'Yes.'

'Did you ever hear of an appeal to all charitable Christians for relief in aid of these same poor starving people?'

'Yes.'

'Did you ever hear of a certain petition to Parliament regarding the destitution of the people?'

'Yes.'

'Did you ever hear of a certain Committee of the House of Commons appointed for the express purpose of examining said petition? and do you remember the nature of their report thereon, James Rut?'

'Well not exactly, aunt. I believe the Committee decided that the destitution was not so great as—as. .'

'Pooh, pooh! I am an old woman, James, but I have a better memory than you; I cannot remember the whole of the report, but I can remember this much: 'It has been proved before your Committee that the statement in the 'Appeal'' (that's the priests' appeal you understand) '*is totally without foundation;*' and they go on to say: 'It appears to your Committee that an erroneous opinion exists in the minds of the people as to their right over the mountains, and that their *not being well-advised on this point has led to the outrages which have been committed;*' and much more that I can't recollect; but you had better get the pamphlet, James, and make yourself acquainted with the subject before you give any further opinion upon it.'*

'Yes aunt, yes aunt, you needn't go on; I had forgotten—I—I see now; I have read the pamphlet.'

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* See a pamphlet entitled '*Evidence given by the Donegal Landlords before the Committee of the House of Commons, in reply to the Charges made against them by the Gwedore priests in the public papers, and in their celebrated 'Appeal' published in* 1858, *upon which they collected a sum of £2,000 and upwards.*'

'Oh! you had forgotten—very well we'll say no more about it then.'

Archie rubbed his hands harder than before—'Ridge and furrow for ever! nothing like it!' he whispered to any one who chose to hear him.

But Archie's triumph was not of long duration—the ladies departed, and the inexorable aunt with her crushing frown being removed, the courage and spirit of James Rut rose from 'zero' to 'blood heat' at a bound.

James was himself again, and so noisy, so contradictory, so universally disagreeable did he become, that Mr. Kindly was obliged to curtail his hospitality and to propose to 'join the ladies' sooner than he had otherwise intended.

In the drawing-room were soothing influences. Kate and Baby speedily drove the 'roarings of the rough Ruts' out of the ears of 'the Brothers.'

It is true, a slight undercurrent of irritation agitated the breasts of some of the party. Thus, Mrs. Burke was intensely disgusted that Findon paid no sort of attention to the smile with which she favored his approach, but continued steadily advancing towards the chair where Kate was seated. And thus, Jane Rut tried to look perfectly unconcerned when Fanshawe answered the question she addressed to him, and passed on to the piano-forte and Baby, instead of remaining with her as she had intended.

James Rut, the social Boreas of that region, was again laid, the O'Neal nightmare was upon him; he felt that he had made a fool of himself, he chafed inwardly, stood upon the rug with his back to the fireplace, spoke to no one, glared about the room in a defiant manner to show his indifference to the bad taste which condemned him, and finally tried to hum a tune and look at his ease, failing in both.

Music was called for.

Mrs. Burke, after much pressing and many excuses, amongst which 'a bad cold,'—'so little practice lately,' were muttered with charming insincerity, seated herself at the piano-forte.

Twenty-years before, Mrs. Burke had doubtless sung well, but time alas! thins flowing voices as well as 'flowing hair,' and the grand compass of Mrs. Burke's voice was in truth much contracted. She had lost exactly six notes (so her friends said), but she herself, not recognizing that fact, made futile endeavours to reach her youthful pitch, endeavours which invariably ended in a little affected cough to hide the note skipped, accompanied by a look betokening disappointment and surprise; thus coughing and simpering she got through a difficult Italian bravura with great *éclat.* If she did not deserve the applause she got, for her singing, she most certainly did for her acting.

Jane Rut followed the widow. Jane had a loud, sonorous voice, totally devoid of feeling—the reverse of musical in short. She prided herself upon being self-taught—a fact that should rather have been suggestive of humility than pride, as the want of artistic skill was but too apparent from the moment she opened her mouth, which she did to its fullest extent; moreover there was no modulation, no light and shade in her singing—it was one continued shout from beginning to end.

Lady O'Neal was a musician born; in her youth she had played beautifully, and her voice had been pronounced by her master, Signor Chantini, 'too good for a lady, it would have made the fortune of a professional.'

No sooner had Miss Rut left the piano, than her ladyship asked Baby for a song, 'just to take the jar out of my ears, my dear,' she whispered to Mrs. Kindly.

Mrs. Kindly smiled good-naturedly and said: 'It is a pity you don't give Jane some lessons, Lady O'Neal, she has a fine voice, but it wants cultivation.'

'I should have given her lessons long ago you may be sure, but according to my notions they would have been thrown away upon her. Music is not in her soul, and no amount of teaching would make a musician of her.'

'But she has a fine natural voice surely?'

'She has a loud natural voice, and so has a peacock; but hush! Baby is going to begin.'

'There! that is what I call singing!' said Lady O'Neal, when Baby had finished; 'her voice is not so powerful as mine was, but quite as sweet, sweeter I think; and oh, my dear! what feeling the child throws into her tones! Thank you, Baby, you have brought tears into my old eyes, which you ought to consider a compliment I can tell you.' Then '*sotto voce*' again to Mrs. Kindly, 'Jane might sing till she was hoarse before she would bring any tears, but those of vexation and pain, into my eyes.'

'My dear Lady O'Neal, you are hard upon poor Jane, she wants instruction, but . . .'

'Pooh, pooh! my dear, Jane is fond of singing, and it would be unkind and ill-natured not to let her sing; but it is painful, positively painful to me to hear her; I would not hurt her feelings by telling her so of course, and I assure you I ought to be very much pitied and admired for the heroism with which I bear my musical martyrdom.'

She finished with a laugh, and looking round the room perceived the subject of their conversation standing in a graceful attitude in front of Archie and Major O'Grady—her well-rounded arm and small white hand displayed to the greatest advantage upon the back of a dark velvet chair.

'Pshaw! always at it!' muttered her aunt.

Perhaps you may agree with Mrs. Kindly in thinking that Lady O'Neal was 'too hard upon poor Jane;' but Lady O'Neal, though eccentric and brusque, had a large heart and a kind nature, and was never hard (willingly) upon any one. She knew Jane Rut better than Mrs. Kindly did; she knew she had ruined her prospects in life by her love of admiration, and thus she said, 'Pshaw! always at it!'

✠

## CHAPTER XI.

### COLD WEATHER AND A WARM WELCOME.

THE Brothers Fortescue had been but a fortnight at Ballyblunder, and yet they were as intimate with the Kindlys as though they had been acquainted for years.

Constant unreserved intercourse, similarity of tastes and pursuits, a readiness to oblige, and happy, buoyant, youthful spirits, will soon transform acquaintance into friendship. Never had a time passed more happily or more quickly, so said the gentlemen, and so thought the ladies, indeed they confessed as much to Archie the evening before he and his friends departed to join their regiment.

Parting is never agreeable even with acquaïntances of but a fortnight's standing, especially when, as in the present instance, a mutual feeling of regard and esteem had sprung up.

Mr. and Mrs. Kindly felt quite attached to their son's friends, they were really sorry to lose them. It was impossible not to like the polite, gentlemanly 'Brothers'—so attentive and yet so unobtrusive; and with all their natural gentleness of manner, they were as full of fun and frolic as Archie himself, whom, by-the-bye, they evidently regarded with an affection and admiration about equally blended.

'You have no idea what a favorite your brother is in the regiment,' said Findon to Kate and Baby one day, 'and he deserves to be, there is no one like him! He is the best fellow in the world! always in good spirits, always good-tempered, and such fun. No one, however out of humour he may be, can withstand the good influence of 'cheery Archie Kindly,' can he, Fan?'

Fanshawe corroborated his brother's eulogy, and the sisters listened and their hearts throbbed to hear such praises of their beloved Archie, praises which they never for a moment doubted his deserving, for they knew his good qualities by heart, and loved him with a clinging affection more entire than is usual even between brother and sister.

'The Brothers' could not have hit upon a more subtle plan than this, whereby to storm the hearts of the sisters, but no such idea had occurred to them; their affection for their friend was *bonâ fide.*

For the first few days after the arrival of 'the Brothers,' constant mistakes (some of them ludicrous enough) had been made with regard to identity. Findon was for ever taken for Fanshawe, and Kate for Baby; but towards the latter part of the visit, no such mistake occurred, a result attributable in great measure to the fact that 'the Brothers' each selected one of the sisters with whom more especially to associate.

Findon was sure to carry Kate's shawl, to help Kate into the boat, to walk by Kate's side; whilst on the other hand, it was always Fanshawe who carried Baby's sketching apparatus, Fanshawe who turned over Baby's music, Fanshawe who sat by Baby's side.

Thus this very exclusive division of attention, answered the purpose for which, doubtless, it was originally intended.

The car was at the door, and Archie all ready for a start. 'The well' was brim-full of portmanteaux and carpet-bags, the fishing-rods and baskets were made fast to the sides, and Kit Kelly was standing at the leader's head; but where were Findon and Fanshawe?

'Are those fellows never coming I wonder!' muttered Archie—'I'll give them a call'—so saying he drew out a horn which reposed by his side, and blew a terrific blast, whereupon the leader sprang forward, upsetting Kit and snapping one of the traces.

'So ho! then—gently—woo-ou—phurh—phur-ur! Lady-bird! Come, Kit, pick yourself up. What made you let go her head?'

'Blur an' ages, Masther Archie! how could I hould the craythur, an' you blowin' the thrumpet in her ear? Me coat's ruined an' me shoulder's spoilt.' Kit proceeded to take off the garment to inspect it.

Sure enough there was a great tear on the top of the shoulder, where the cheek of Lady-bird's bit had struck him. Kit's shirt had also suffered, as also the skin beneath it, and a slight stain of blood was apparent on the linen; this caught Archie's eye, as he chucked him a crown to mend his coat; he jumped hastily from the car—'Kit you're hurt' he cried; 'what a blockhead I am, where is it?'

Kit threw his coat over his shoulders, and tying the sleeves together round his neck began busying himself with the broken trace.

'You are not *much* hurt, Kit, I hope?' persisted Archie.

'Shure it's broke intirely, Masther Archie, but I'll soon mend it.'

'Never mind the trace, Kit, it's your own shoulder I'm talking of.'

'An' what ails me shoulder? may be you'll have a bit o' sthring in your pocket, Capt'in; bad look to the trace for a rotten ould—have you the sthring, sirr?'

'Kit I saw blood on your shirt—you are hurt—here, Rory, (calling to one of the stable lads,) catch hold of Lady-bird's head. Now, Kit, come in doors and let's see what harm's done; I am very sorry really. I . . .'

'Ah boderashun, Masther Archie! shure I'm not hort at all! have you the sthring, sirr?'

'I saw blood on your shirt! and besides, what did you take your coat off for, if you are not hurt?'

'What for did I take off me coat is it?—begorra! becase av the hate, yer honor! Blood!—och! divil a dhrop thin! shure 'twas the iron-mowld you seed—bad look to Biddy for that same.—Have you the sthring, Masther Archie?'

It was useless pressing Kit further, he would not own to having received any injury; he picked up the crown, and saying he would 'dhrink success to the Capt'in' he set to work to mend the trace, which, being made of rope, was soon effected.

And now Findon and Fanshawe made their appearance on the steps, accompanied by their host and hostess and their two fair daughters.

Hands were shaken, adieux spoken, and 'the Brothers' mounted the car.

'When shall you get leave again, Archie?' said Kate looking very sorrowful.

'I don't know—as soon as possible depend upon it,—in a month perhaps.'

'Well, whenever it is, you must bring your friends back with you, that is, if they can put up with another week of Ballyblunder.'

'Thank you, sir! we'll come as often as you ask us!' cried both brothers at once.

'I never spent such a happy time in my life,' said Findon eagerly.

'Nor I,' cried Fanshawe—'never.'

'Then you will soon pay us another visit I hope,' said Mrs. Kindly.

The girls were mute, but the heightened colour and moist eyes, showed that they were not indifferent to the comings and goings of those on the car.

'Good by!' cried Archie. 'Hold fast, boys, let her go, Rory!' and away they went amidst the waving of handkerchiefs on all sides.

A turn of the road at the distance of half-a-mile, brought the travellers broadside to the house once more; two white handkerchiefs were still waving at the hall door; it is needless to say that this last adieu was eagerly and enthusiastically responded to.

* * * *

A long silence reigned on the car for some miles after it had left Ballyblunder; even Archie, who was seldom at a loss for speech, smoked his cigar in solemn silence. He dearly loved his family, and was always sad at leaving them; but silence and sadness were alike foreign to his nature; his was a happy temperament; possessed of youth, strength, and health, he always looked on the bright side of things, it was natural that he should. When we get old and ill we look on the dark side, which is natural too, for by that time experience tells us the dark side comes uppermost the oftenest.

'Ha, my lady! *you* are in good spirits at all events—steady, Lady-bird, steady. Come boys, cheer up! let's hear the sweet sound of your voices; have you lost your tongue, Fin?'

'No, only . . .'

'Only your heart, eh! Well never mind, you'll get over it I dare say.'

'I didn't say that; the fact is I have nothing to talk about.'

'Ah indeed! you must be very bad then,' laughed

Archie; 'and you, Fan, are you in the same predicament? dumbfoundered, like the English who 'a' run awa' fra the hundred pipers an' a' an' a',' eh, old fellow?'

But neither Findon nor Fanshawe responded to the 'chaff' of his friend in his usual light-hearted manner, so he good-naturedly dropt the subject, shrewdly suspecting that his banter was not acceptable. 'Hang it all! they can't be in love with the girls already,' he thought.

The departure of 'the Brothers' from Ballyblunder had a singular effect upon the two young ladies. They seemed to have changed characters,—Kate was quiet, and silent, and thoughtful; Baby merry and loquacious.

They both continually regretted Archie's absence, wished he was back again, and wondered when he would return; they were silent as to 'the Brothers;' which, considering the invariable attention shown to them by those gentlemen, seemed ungrateful.

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Time wore on. Summer and autumn had passed away, and winter had set in; Kate's smiles had returned long ago, and Baby was her usual quiet self again.

Sheep-killing still flourished upon Slaughmacuish in spite of the continued exertions (according to their own account) of priests and police to crush the evil. It was strange that no delinquent was ever taken, and that fact forces the conviction that either 'the peelers' were very stupid or 'the boys,' very clever.

So time wore on, and with the exception of a call from 'the Lady of the Lake,' from Major O'Grady, or from Mrs. Burke, and an occasional 'irruption of the Ruts' (as Archie would have said), the Ballyblunder family had remained undisturbed; but such a state of domestic repose was not destined to last much longer.

It was a bright, clear, frosty afternoon towards the end of December;—the girls were keeping themselves warm by walking and talking vigorously. They were on their way home, and had just left the turnpike-road and turned into their own approach, when the sound of wheels and the sharp ring of horses' feet upon the hard ground were distinctly heard, though as yet the vehicle, whatever it might be, was some way off.

'I wonder what is coming,' said Baby, 'let us stop and see.'

'Oh!' said Kate, after waiting a quarter of a minute, 'how cold it is, look at my breath! do you see? Please go on, Baby, I am perished.'

'Very well,' said Baby, always ready to agree to anything.

At that moment a horn was heard, and both the girls stopt simultaneously.

The quick patter of horses' feet mingled with the music, (if I may be forgiven for calling the harsh and discordant blasts which now saluted the young ladies' ears, by so sweet a name,) and with one glance of surprise and delight at each other, they flew back towards the road they had left; then suddenly stopping and blushing, they stood with their eyes fixed upon the turn where the car would first become visible. They had not long to wait.

'There they are!' cried both at once as the car spun round the corner. They had each recognized Archie's horn, but why they should have applied the plural number to the expected arrival, who shall say? —he was driving tandem, and they meant the horses of course. Be that as it may, their eyes sparkled and their cheeks glowed with a degree of pleasure they did not care to express.

The girls were soon recognized; hats waved, shouts arose, and Archie, clapping the trumpet to his mouth and making a desperate and most abortive attempt at 'Rory O'More,' sprung his horses into a gallop, swung round the turn into the lane, and rattled up to the sisters.

Almost before the car stopt, Findon and Fanshawe were on the ground shaking hands warmly with the trembling, blushing, laughing girls.

'So you came out to meet us,' said Archie.

'To meet you! we had not the least idea you were coming,' cried Kate.

'No idea we were coming! Didn't my mother get my letter this morning?'

'No, we have not had a line from you for a week; we have been expecting a letter every day, and thought it very odd you never wrote. Are you sure you did?'

'Yes, Kate, my jewel,' said Archie, who had been rummaging in the numerous pockets of his numerous coats; yes I am quite sure, and so may you be as soon as you like. Look here!' he held up a letter.

'Well I declare, Archie!' said Kate, taking the letter from him, 'what a careless little fellow you are.'

'Do you think he has grown shorter, Miss Kate?' asked Findon smiling at the diminutive epithet.

'No, but don't you know that 'Little John' was more than six feet high?'

'It is a derisive epithet you see, Fin; these girls have no reverence for their elder brother, never had. How are the old folk my dear?'

'I won't tell you if you ask so disrespectfully, Archie. How surprised they will be to see you!' said Kate.

'I'll drive on and break the astounding intelligence of the arrival of 'the Brothers,' the blow must not fall too suddenly.'

So saying, Archie proceeded towards the house, and left his friends to escort Kate and Baby.

They had still half-a-mile to walk (Irish measure), and although the road was good, and the air keen, their progress was not rapid.

'The Brothers' were too happy to resist expressing their delight, and the girls talked and laughed as fast as possible, that their own happiness might not be too apparent.

At the hall door they were met by Mr. and Mrs. Kindly, and received a very warm and cordial welcome from both; though in Mrs. Kindly's manner, a close observer might have detected a certain nervous anxiety which she could not altogether repress, especially as the new arrivals appeared in their old order,—Findon with Kate, Fanshawe with Baby.

All apologies with regard to their abrupt appearance, were nipt in the bud.

'It was careless of Archie, to be sure, putting the letter in his pocket instead of into the post, but it was of no consequence, except indeed to the gentlemen themselves; if they would put up with . . .'

'' Common doings to-night,' you shall have ' chicken fixings' to-morrow, boys!' chimed in Archie, irreverently interrupting his father's speech of civility.

What a happy, merry evening that was at Ballyblunder! such questionings and cross-questionings, such joking! 'Had they seen Mrs. Burke lately? had she brought the Major on his knees yet? and 'the Lady of the Lake'—how was she?—and 'the rough Ruts?'—and Father Hogan—and Kit Kelly—and the sheep-killers? . . .'

Never was there such a Babel of voices!

'Did you say, Miss Baby, that Father Hogan had tumbled into a bog-hole?' asked Findon, who caught a stray word now and then from the running cross-fire which was hotly sustained all round.

'Oh no, it was the sheep!' laughed Baby.

'What do you say, Kate? James Rut going to be married?'

'Nonsense, Archie! what do you mean?'

'You said something about 'married' I am certain, and 'James Rut' . . .'

'Oh I was telling Mr. Findon the story James Rut told me of the quantity of fish he caught—more than he could carry he said—'carry,' Archie, not 'marry.''

'Not a word of truth in it either way—what crackers James Rut always tells!'

'Such quantities of snipe, Archie!'

'Oh yes! we heard the horses' feet so far off!'

'How many did you see?'

'Did you recognize the tune?'

'More than fifty.'

'Oh! is your sister come?'

'A cat on the lawn!'

'I should so much like to see her . . .'

'I'll shoot her to-morrow if there's virtue in an ounce of lead!'

'Kit Kelly shot at her . . .'

'He was drowned last week.'

'Poor fellow! what colour was he?'

'Black and tan.'

'Such a beautiful eagle!'

'Dead!—nonsense—what of?'

'James Rut . . .'

'The distemper . . .'

'Upon my word,' laughed Mr. Kindly, who had been listening to the conversation, much amused at the desultory fragments which reached his sense of hearing, in the forlorn and broken-down fashion above recorded—'you must be clever people if you understand each other. If I did not know already, I am sure I shouldn't learn from what I hear, whether Kit Kelly or Sancho had been drown'd, or which Archie meant to shoot, the cat or Miss Fortescue! who by-the-bye we shall have great pleasure in seeing at Ballyblunder. Mrs. Fortescue has arrived at Derry, has she not?'

'No, sir, not yet,' said Findon; 'my mother and sister are on their way, we expect them the day after to-morrow, and so we thought we should like—that is we did not like to leave this part of the world without taking leave of you—of all—and thanking you and Mrs. Kindly for your great—for your . . .'

'Fin! what a dreadful bad speaker you are!' broke in Archie—'the fact is, sir, these two obstinate young men are bent upon going to Edinburgh and taking Mrs. and Miss Fortescue with them, who, I have private reasons for believing had much rather pass their Christmas in 'ould' Ireland; come, Fin, own the truth, ain't you decoying your mother and sister over to 'auld Reekie' on false pretences?'

'No indeed, they both want to go to Scotland very much.'

'Edinburgh is well worth seeing,' said Mr. Kindly, 'but we must try and persuade Mrs. Fortescue to pay us a visit before crossing the water; having once seen Edinburgh, one could not have the face to ask her to Ballyblunder.'

'Oh yes, Mr. Findon, you must really contrive to get Miss Fortescue here somehow or other, I want to see her so very much!' said Kate eagerly.

'It would give us the greatest pleasure to see your mother and sister,' said Mrs. Kindly; 'if they have no other engagement, and would put up with a stupid Christmas here, we should so much like to have them.'

Findon expressed himself gratefully obliged, as did also his brother, for the very kind invitation to their mother and sister, and they promised to write on the morrow a joint epistle acquainting them with the proffered hospitality at Ballyblunder.

'They will be sure to come,' said Fanshawe, 'they have been longing to see Ballyblunder for—ever since we told them about—about it—you know, Fin.'

'Of course they have; both my mother and Helen, I remember, have often said how much they should like to know Mr. and Mrs. Kindly.'

'And the two Miss Kindlys I hope,' said Kate.

'Oh yes! *that* they both said many times!' cried 'the Brothers' in a breath.

Mr. and Mrs. Kindly smiled at the boyish eagerness of the two young men. 'So earnest, so open-hearted, so natural—it was quite charming, quite refreshing to converse with them.'

After dinner, when everybody had heard everything there was to say, music was called for, and Baby sang, and Kate played; then followed whiskey punch, of which the ladies had each a wine-glass from the gentlemen's 'brew.'

'The Brothers,' as a matter of course supplied the sisters.

'Come, Archie,' said Mrs. Kindly, 'as you have no young lady to provide for, I'll take compassion upon you, and help you through your tumbler.'

'No call in life, my dear mother, for any such kind assistance, unless quite agreeable you know.'

'Yes, Archie, it's quite agreeable thank you; now then!—a full glass if you please.'

'Will that do?'

'No, it's not half full yet—there! that will do.'

'I should think it would!—hem—without any disrespect to you, mama, I would rather share my tumbler with a young lady than—than with a—middle-aged one.'

'You saucy boy! I dare say you would, but as it is you must put up with a middle-aged one at present.'

'Gentlemen, here's your health and a hearty welcome back to Ballyblunder,' said Mr. Kindly.

The toast and the sentiment were warmly responded to. Archie affecting to appropriate them to himself, made a ludicrous speech, which, if not in reality witty, sounded so to his partial hearers, and caused much mirth.

It was a most agreeable evening, one to be looked back to with mixed feelings by some of the party, to be remembered with pleasure by all. . . . 'The Brothers' made an immense stride in the regard and favour of Mr. and Mrs. Kindly that night; how they sped with the young ladies I could tell, if I chose to introduce my readers to their bedroom, which I do not; suffice it to say that Kate praised Fanshawe excessively, and Baby was unusually energetic in her admiration of Findon.

'Well,' said Mrs. Kindly to her liege lord as they retired for the night, 'if those boys *should* take a fancy to our girls, I don't think I could refuse my consent, could you?'

'Pooh!' said her husband patting her cheek, 'you ladies are always thinking of falling in love.'

'And you men are always doing it without thinking.'

'Faith! we do very often, Mary; but *I* did not you know, did I?'

There could be but one answer.

## CHAPTER XII.

◆

### THE TURF CABIN.

IN a low cabin with walls of mud, and a roof of turf, situated at the foot of Slaughmacuish, six men were congregated together; they were sitting round a long narrow table, drinking and smoking; a savory smell of roast meat and whiskey punch filled the room.

Of these men the reader has, as yet, been introduced to but one—'Ben Brady.' Big Ben, as he was familiarly called, sat at one end of the table; four of his companions were men of the same stamp as himself, rough, savage-looking, devil-may-care vagabonds, up to anything from 'pitch-and-toss to manslaughter' as Ben would have said; the sixth was a half-witted boy, known by the name of Noodle Duggins. They were in high good humour,—full stomachs make merry hearts, and as they washed down huge mouthfuls of mutton with large draughts of whiskey, the jokes became coarser, the laughter louder, and the room fuller and fuller of tobacco-smoke, the dense fumes of which hung in graceful festoons around the heads and throats of the burly Bacchanals, now settling down over the forehead of some hang-dog looking knave in the form of a close drawn cap, now wreathing and twisting around the throat like a coil of rope.

Some such fancy seemed to strike Big Ben, for he roared out,—

'See till that now! look at him, boys! may I niver! bad look to me bud the knot is under his ear! an' the rope across his weazen! an' the white cap an' all! ha! ha! why, Moony, man, you're hanging yerself wid tobacco smoke; ha! ha! ha!'

'You're dramin' of yer own disase, Ben; you've bin in the jug wunst, may be the next time you'll be hung out to dhry like dirty clothes, from the top of it.'

'Faix you had him on the raw there, Moony; how did you like yer quarters in the jug he talks about, Ben?' cried one.

'I've bin in worse places,' said Ben, not at all put out by the allusion to his imprisonment.

'The divil o' much whiskey come out o' that 'jug,' I'll hould fourpince,' said another.

'Or wint into it!' shouted a third.

'Did they let yees smoke, Ben?'

'Had ye roasted mutton for yer dinner?'

'Did they plasther up yer head that the Capt'in bruck agin the rocks?' cried Moony. 'Bad 'cess to me! bud I'd have guv a pound to have sin Ben scuttlin' through the air like a wounded magpie!'

'It's asy to laugh an' asy to talk,' said Ben angrily, 'bud it's not asy to get the better of Archie Kindly; I'd chuck any of yees here as far as he chucked me (he looked round fiercely), but I'd as liv fight the divil as Archie Kindly, an' I'm not above ownin' as much.'

'You'd a gun, Ben; why didn't yees shoot him or knock him over wid it?'

'A gun! by the hoky! an' what wor the use of a gun agin him! He bruck it in two bits like a rotten stick, an' when I hot him across the head wid the iron barrils as hard as iver I could dhrive (an' some of yees may likely know how hard that is), may I niver! bud the iron flew into tin thousand pieces like glass, an' the Capt'in minded it no more nor if I'd sthruck him wid a bulrush!'

'Begorra! bud the Capt'in's a gran' man, an' could ate big Ben Brady as asy as I swallow this potaty.'

'You're a fool, Noodle, or I'd squeeze the potaty out of yer throat quicker than it wint in,' said Brady fiercely.

'Faix I'm not such a fool as to fight wid Archie Kindly anny way, he'd ate the two av us; he tossed big Ben Brady as asy as a bull 'ud toss a foumart.'

'Hould yer ——— tongue, you fool! what do you know about it?' and the brute hurled a pewter pot at Noodle's head.

He put up his hand, but too late; the pot struck him full on the forehead, inflicting a deep cut, and prostrating the boy upon the floor.

'Shame! shame! shame!' resounded on all sides; for 'naturals,' as people in Noodle's unhappy condition are called in Ireland, are privileged persons. They are allowed to say and do what they please, and are protected, fed, clothed, and housed by the community at large.

'Shame! Ben Brady, for strikin' poor Noodle, an' he a born 'nat'ral!'' cried Moony.

'I didn't mane to het him or to hort him, bud to fright him. He shouldn't have angered me as he did,' replied Brady sulkily, for he knew he had done wrong, and in reality felt ashamed of himself; but he was a violent-tempered, brutal man, and would ill-treat any one when in a passion.

'Pooh!' said Moony, 'what signifies what poor Noodle says? who minds him? It was a savage and a wicked blow.'

Ben Brady muttered again that he 'didn't mean to het him.'

In the mean while Noodle was picked up, and his head washed and bandaged, but he had a lump on his forehead almost as big as a cricket ball, and his face, always pale, looked ghastly.

As soon as he was out of his friends' hands, he walked up to Ben, and fixing on his savage assailant his large black eyes, in which the light of reason and the glitter of insanity seemed struggling for the mastery, he said in a slow, solemn voice, quite different from his usual quaint, jerking manner of speaking,—

'Big Ben Brady, you're a murderin' villin! an' by six weeks is come an' gone yer head 'ull lie as low as dud mine the now: on the cold heather an' the hard rocks, the moon shinin' on yer bloody brow, wid no hope an' no help, you shall lie an' die.' So saying Noodle turned on his heel and walked out of the cabin.

Ben turned very pale; he evidently did not relish Noodle's address, though he affected to laugh at it.

Noodle had scarcely left the cabin, when the latch was lifted and in walked a policeman.

'Save all here!' was his salutation.

'You're welcome; take a glass, Byrne?' said Ben.

'Faith I will so, an' a bite too av I can get it.'

Moony shoved a dish, containing huge lumps of half cold mutton, towards him.

'Help yerself, man alive; did yees meet Noodle as ye come in?' he asked.

'No, I didn't. This is prime meat, boys!'

'Ay! it ates *Kindly*, don't it, Byrne?'

'Ha! ha! faith it does *so*, Moony, mi man! uncommon *Kindly*. Ha! ha! Well, well! but you'r a quare 'craythur.''

'Tare an' ages! who comes now?' exclaimed Byrne, as the latch of the door was again lifted. He seemed satisfied with the appearance of the fresh arrival, for after staring at him for a moment he resumed his attack on the mutton.

'Well, boys! how goes it?'

'Ah, Misther Donovan! yer sarvant, sirr, take a sate, yer honour, an' a glass?' said Moony.

Donovan seated himself, and looking around, nodded good-humouredly to the company.

'Come, boys!' said he, 'glasses round, I've news for you.'

They all filled and drank 'success' to whatever it might be.

'And now,' says Donovan, 'to business; first an' foremost here's a pound apiece for you,'—he counted down five one-pound notes. 'Their riverences,' he continued, 'bein' made acquainted with the distitushun an' distress of the starvin' pisantry of the county of * * * have sint you relief, boys—see here! Ben, you look half starved to be sure, take yer money, man, an' don't apply to the parish for the next two weeks anny way!'

There was a general roar of laughter at this, and each man took his note, and waited for what was to come.

'Have you nothin' for me, Misther Donovan?' asked the policeman as he wiped his mouth with the cuff of his coat, and leaned forward to light his pipe at a huge tallow candle, which was stuck into the neck of a bottle, and was 'guttering' down upon the table in many a fantastic shape. 'Have you nothin' for me, sirr? shure I works as hard as anny of 'em in the good cause.'

'To be shure you do, Byrne! Have I nothin' for you is it? in coorse I have.' Donovan put his hand into his pocket and pulled out a paper. 'Here's an ordher from the Castle, from the Lord Leeftinant himself, promotin' James Byrne to the rank of sergeant in the police, for his great exershuns in the cause of ordher and law.'

There was another shout of laughter, in which Byrne was fain to join, though he did not admire the joke particularly.

'Well,' he said at last, 'av I don't desarve promoshun from the Castle, I desarve somethin' from their riverences I think; a word from me 'ud spoil yer spoort, Misther Donovan, I'm bould to believe.'

'Faith, Jim Byrne, it's thrue for you, so it would! but I'm thinkin', may be, that word you'll niver spake,' said Donovan quietly.

'An' why not, Misther Donovan? there's fifty pounds to be arned by spakin' the word, an' nothin' for houldin' it back, it seems; why wouldn't I spake it thin?'

'Fifty pounds is a large lump o' money, Jim, shure enough, but it's little good it 'ud do to a dead man,' replied Donovan in the easiest tone imaginable.

The policeman turned pale, but he rallied himself, and said, with a bad attempt at a laugh,—

'Shure, Misther Donovan, it war only jokin' I war, you know that, sirr.'

'In coorse, Jim, I know that well enough,'—he fixed his eyes sternly and steadily on the man as he spoke.

Byrne changed colour again, but said no more.

'Oh, ho! my man!' thought Donovan, 'you're a slippery chap I'm thinking, an' must be watched, or warned, which last will, may be, do as well or better.'

'An' now, boys,' he said aloud, 'you can't expict their riverences to keep you intirely, you must help yerselves you know, there's lashins of food on the mountains for the fetchin'.'

'An' we are the boys to fetch it' cried Moony. 'Come, Ben, yer sowl! lave the whiskey alone for a bit, an' take a turn wid me on the mountain side; the night air 'ull cool yer coppers, me man.'

'Don't you hurry no man's cattle, Moony, I'll come whin I'm ready, divil a sooner,' said Ben in a surly tone.

'By the hoky! but big Ben Brady's afeard av Noodle's propheshy, an' he dar'n't sthir the night, ha! ha!' laughed Tim Higgins, a black-browed, lean, lathy fellow, but muscular withal, and of a determined countenance.

'By ——' said Ben with a brutal oath, starting up suddenly, 'I'se let you know, Tim Higgins, that I'm not afeard o' Noodle, nor o' you nether; blur an' ages bud I'll smash the lot av yees into smithereens! bad look to me bud I 'ull.'

'Smash away, man,' said Tim coolly, 'two can play at that, an' I'm jist the boy to make one in the game.'

Ben grumbled in a threatening but indistinct tone. The truth is, his heart was not in proportion to his body; his strength was great and his temper violent, and he would ill-treat and abuse any one who would let him; but, like all bullies, he was not in reality courageous, and if defied or resisted by a man at all approaching to his own physical powers, he was soon cowed. This, Tim had suspected for some time, and now felt convinced of.

He laughed contemptuously.

'Come, me smasher,' he cried, patting him on the back with a great bony hand, as hard and as heavy as a bag of tenpenny nails, 'let's you an' me go an' look for Archie Kindly, may be he's on the mountain the night.'

Ben muttered and growled, and then left the house with Tim and Moony.

Donovan stayed behind a few minutes to speak to the other two men, and having given them their instructions, he went away with the policeman.

'Byrne,' he said, as soon as they were outside, 'you are a great fool for sayin' what you did the now.'

'I was, Misther Donovan, an' shure I'll niver say the like agin, sirr. I dunna what come over me.'

'I know what come over you, James Byrne; you wur angry becase the rest of the boys got pounds apiece, an' you got nothin', that wur what come over you; bud you wur a fool for yer pains. Now listen to me; why should you be ped? you don't pass yer nights on the mountains amidst snow, an' rain, an' wind, an' storms, do yees? you don't run anny risks, or dangers, hidin' away in holes an' caves when they are huntin' ye down like a wild beast, do yees? Well then, what are you to be ped for?'

'Shure I know it, sirr, I'm mortial sorry, Misther Donovan, I said what I said, bud I'll niver say so agin, nor I didn't think it thin.'

'Well well, me man, we'll say no more about it, only *you* know an' *I* know that anny one that turns traitor, be he peasant or peeler, 'ud be put out av the way wid as little boderashun as ef he wur a mad dog, or a Saxon sheep itself; an' now good night to you, Jim, go yer rounds on the mountains, man, an' look afther poor Misther Kindly's sheep. Musha poor man! purtect his property, Jim.'

So saying, Donovan went his way, leaving Byrne to his own thoughts.

Donovan's hints had brought the policeman's heart into his mouth; he knew how imprudent he had been in hinting at the reward offered for the apprehension of the sheep-killers; he knew (Ribbonman as he was) well enough what would be his fate if he 'peached,' or in the slightest degree gave the faintest clue to the proceedings of the depredators: and the idea of him, Jim Byrne, lying on his back in a bog-hole with his throat cut, was by no means agreeable, when brought so graphically home to his imagination, by the figure of 'the Saxon sheep.'

Jim Byrne was one of seventy policemen sent down from Dublin upon the requisition of Mr Kindly and other magistrates (soldiers had been refused), for the purpose of hunting out and securing the sheep-killing depredators of the county. Jim Byrne was a Roman Catholic and a Ribbonman, he therefore obeyed the behests of his priest and his party; he lounged about in idleness during the day, at night he ate mutton and drank whiskey; the mutton and the whiskey were both illicit and he knew it, but what of that? he obeyed orders as in duty bound. True he had other orders which he did not obey, but they were of an inferior and insignificant description, merely police orders. Brought up, as he had been, in an atmosphere of deceit, taught to respect the truth, only so far as it was advantageous to himself or his employers—to condemn lying and stealing, only so far as they were practised unsuccessfully, Jim Byrne was, of course, a rogue, and would gladly have 'sold' his friends the sheep-killers:—he would have eaten their mutton, drank their whiskey, and handed them over to justice if he had dared; not for the sake of justice, which in the abstract he detested (as well he might), but for the sake of the reward offered for their apprehension. Donovan was right: it was the sight of the money given to the other men, which had caused the slip of the tongue before-mentioned, and which Jim Byrne regretted as soon as spoken, not on account of the want of faith, or the traitorous falsehood on his part which it indicated, but from bodily fear and dread of the possible consequences of his imprudence.

Dark looks had been bent upon him by other eyes than those of Donovan—he had seen them:—'he would be true to the boys,' he dared not be otherwise.

Jim Byrne stood still for some minutes on the spot where Donovan left him: he was uneasy, anxious;—nay terrified at what had passed. He knew the daring and the audacity of those lawless men; he also knew their stringent laws, and the necessity for them. Any, even the slightest, appearance of treachery on the part of a member of their fraternity was, he well knew, death to the traitor. As he stood on the road in the pale moonlight thinking of these things, he heard a whistle across the bog on his left: he started slightly, it was answered from the bog on his right; he flushed up instantly to the very roots of his hair, and then turned pale as death.

A man jumped over the small ditch which skirted the road, walked rapidly and quietly up to Byrne, and putting a paper into his hand, jumped over the opposite ditch and disappeared in the gathering gloom.

Byrne looked at the paper—it contained one word only, written in large characters, and, dark though the night was, he could distinctly read that word,—'BEWARE.' The signature was a death's head and cross bones.

He trembled violently, crushed the paper in his hand, and set off as fast as possible towards home; he staggered and reeled like a drunken man as he went along, and when he arrived at the police barrack, he crept up to his bed shivering and shaking as if in an ague fit; and yet Jim Byrne was no coward, he would have faced a loaded pistol, or half-a-dozen of them in the way of duty; but he could not face the dread of secret assassination which he felt hung over him; he could not face the dreadful revenge of the secret society to which he belonged, whose vengeance, he was well aware, was swift, sure, and terrible.

⁂

## CHAPTER XIII.

### UP THE MOUNTAIN.

NEWTON DUGGINS was one of a class common in Ireland. As you will find a hunchback in almost every town of Germany, so will you find 'a wittol' or half-witted man in nearly every village in Ireland.

Newton Duggins, or, as he was universally called, Noodle Duggins, was, however, not an imbecile by birth—he had fallen off a car when about ten years old, and had, it was supposed, injured his brain, for he had never been sane since, that is to say, he neither talked nor acted like other boys; but he who took Noodle for an absolute fool would have found himself much mistaken. Noodle, like most others in his unfortunate state, was of a very impulsive nature:—with no religious principle to guide him, scarcely knowing right from wrong, his affection and gratitude to those who showed him kindness, were nevertheless unbounded, and his hatred towards those who ill-treated him, was proportionately strong. Noodle was much attached to the Kindly family;—a 'bit and a sup' were always at his service in the kitchen of Ballyblunder, and many a comfortable night had he passed in the hay loft over the stables, with a truss of straw for a pillow, and a horse-rug for a covering,—a sweeter and a cleaner place to sleep in than his mother's cabin, and one which, in summer-time especially, he was particularly fond of occupying.

In return for these favors, Noodle would run errands for the whole household. He was now a tall, lanky stripling of seventeen years, and able 'to travel' across the mountains with the best boy in the parish; he also frequently helped in the garden, especially if either Kate or Baby was there, of whom he was very fond; and he would accompany Archie on his fishing and shooting expeditions; for Noodle, fool or no fool, always knew where the biggest trout was to be found, or where the snipe and wildfowl were most plentiful.

Noodle's invariable dress, winter and summer, was an old regimental coat, and a straw hat;—the latter ornamented with woodcocks' and wildfowls' feathers; the former patched at the elbows with the yellow facings which once adorned the skirts, now alas! no more, they having been docked, and the garment cut into the semblance of a round jacket.

Although Noodle was known to be an ally of the Kindlys, he was nevertheless allowed to go backwards and forwards amongst the sheep-killers (as has been seen) at his pleasure; they considered him too great a fool to take notice of or to understand what he saw, or to remember anything he might for a moment understand.

A fatal error, as some of the party in the 'shebeen-house,' found to their cost.

When Noodle left the cabin after his wound was dressed, he walked straight to Ballyblunder, muttering to himself and shaking his fist at nothing, all the way. He entered the kitchen and sat down on a low stool by the fire, his usual place, still muttering and shaking his fist.

It was past eight o'clock and the servants were going to supper.

'Come, Noodle,' said the good-natured cook, as she brought him a plate with a lump of bread and a thick slice of 'corned' mutton on it, 'come lave off mutterin', and ate this, 'twill put some colour into your face which is jist as white as—Lord save us! what's this?' as she caught sight of the bandage and the blood.

Noodle rose up, pushed aside the proffered plate, and said in his usual sing-song voice,—

'Whar's the Capt'in?—I must spake till the Capt'in.'

'Capt'in Archie is it? shure he's in the dinin'-room, or drawin'-room along wid the quality. What do you want wid the Capt'in? Poor boy! who's hort ye this a-way, Noodle?'

'Whar's Capt'in Archie?—I must spake till the Capt'in,' repeated the 'Innocent.'

Cook tried ineffectually to find out how he had been hurt, and who had hurt him; he would neither answer her questions nor suffer her to examine the wound, but he kept repeating his wish to see 'the Capt'in,' and that was all they could get out of him.

Accordingly a message was brought to Archie that Noodle Duggins was wounded, and wished to see him immediately.

Archie instantly obeyed the summons, wondering very much what it could all mean. As soon as he appeared in the kitchen, Noodle walked into the yard, saying sententiously—'The kitchen's too full o' women for men to talk in.'

Archie smiled and followed him.

'Well I niver! the imperance of that fool passes all belef!' exclaimed the scullery-maid.

'Now, Noodle,' said Archie when they were clear of the house, 'what is it?'

Noodle made no answer, but strode on to the stable, opened the door, went in, climbed up a ladder which led to the hay-loft before-mentioned, and seated himself on a truss of straw.

Archie still followed, for he knew by experience that Noodle must be humoured, if the object were to get any information out of him, so he ascended the ladder in silence and sat down on a truss of straw opposite the 'Natural.'

The night was cloudy, but a bright moon high up in the heavens cast an occasional gleam into the loft, and Archie could see Noodle hunting for something under the straw upon which he sat: presently he pulled out a long horse-pistol and thrust it into Archie's hand.

'Look,' he said, 'kill him wid it, Capt'in, 'twill do it asy.'

'Kill who, Noodle?'

'Big Ben Brady—'twill do it asy, big as he is!'

'Why should I kill Ben Brady, Noodle?'

'Becase he hot me wid a pewtner pot, an' cut me head open, an' becase he kills the sheep. Will yees kill him, Capt'in Archie, av you plaze?'

'Where is he, Noodle? I must catch him before I can kill him you know.'

'He's on Slaughmacuish wid the rest, a killin' sheep.'

'The deuce he is! Are you sure of that, Noodle?'

The eyes of the 'Innocent' sparkled with delight; he saw that Archie was getting in the proper frame of mind for his purpose, but he only nodded his head in reply.

'And who is with him? who are the rest?'

'Moony and Tim Higgins—will you come an' kill him, Capt'in?'

Archie started up, he caught sight of the blood on Noodle's face.

'Why, Noodle! what's the matter here? some one has been hurting you, my poor boy!'

''Twas big Ben Brady hot me wid a pewtner pot, but I'll be even wid him this night. Will you come av you plaze, Capt'in?'

'Will I?—I should think I will,' cried Archie jumping up. 'Can you find these men, Noodle? could you guide me to the spot where I might shoot them with this fellow?' showing the pistol.

A nod of the head, and a twinkle of the eye, were the only answer, but Archie seemed satisfied.

'Come along then,' he said, 'come into the kitchen and have your wound looked to, and something to eat, and then we'll start. Confound those fellows' impudence! so they *will* go on sheep-killing will they?—well! we'll see about that.'

Archie quickly left the loft, followed by the 'Natural,' and handing him over to the care of the cook, betook himself with all haste to the drawing-room, where he related Noodle's story to his eager listeners.

'And now,' he cried, as soon as he had finished his tale, 'who's for Slaughmacuish?'

Up jumped Findon and Fanshawe as a matter of course, and declared themselves ready for the mountain in five minutes.

'Just give us time to put on thick shoes and a big coat, and we'll be with you,' cried Findon, as 'the Brothers' hurried out of the room.

Mr Kindly meanwhile spoke to Archie, and begged and desired that, should Noodle's story prove true, prudence and caution might be the watchwords of the night; no hot-headed rashness must endanger the safety of those who were going out. Archie promised everything—he would be cautious as a cat, and prudent as a policeman; but surely his father did not wish them *not* to go?

No, Mr. Kindly did not object to their going, provided they would be prudent, and would not have recourse to violence, unless they found it absolutely necessary in self-defence. These sheep-killers, he said, must be put a stop to, and he hoped they would catch one or two of the rascals.

It was voted too late to send to the Freemans, but they knocked up Pat Purdy, who would make the fourth 'good man and true' besides Noodle, upon whose assistance, however, they did not very greatly depend; and Archie determined upon taking his dog Monk, a powerful St. Bernard's, equal to, at least, two men, so his master declared.

'But Monk will bark, and betray our whereabouts,' said Findon.

'Bark! not he,' replied Archie, 'he'll growl a bit, just loud enough for us to hear him, when he smells or sees the scoundrels, which he will do long before any of us; but he'll not betray us, take my word for it.'

The friends were all armed with a heavy shillelah, and Noodle with the horse-pistol *minus* a lock;—it was decided that revolvers would be unnecessary, they considered themselves quite strong enough without them, and they had no reason for supposing that the enemy carried fire-arms:—and so they started, Noodle leading; a brisk walk of rather more than an hour brought them to the foot of Slaughmacuish.

They now halted and arranged their plans. It was thought advisable to divide. Archie would go with Noodle to the spot where he expected to fall in with the sheep-killers, whilst 'the Brothers' and Pat Purdy were to make the best of their way to O'Neil's tower, where, Noodle said, 'the boys' would be sure to bring the slaughtered sheep.

To all the remonstrances of 'the Brothers' against being left behind, Archie turned a deaf ear; he would keep Monk with him, but he declared that the post of danger was, in reality, O'Neil's tower, as he should probably miss the fellows on the mountain, whilst they, if they waited long enough, would be sure to catch them.

They separated, and proceeded cautiously and silently to their work. Pat Purdy and 'the Brothers' arrived at O'Neil's tower without any occurrence worthy of note, although they stopt half-a-dozen times, fancying they heard suspicious sounds. Pat stationed 'the Brothers' within the tower, enjoining strict silence and a sharp look out.

'An' now, yer honours,' he said, 'I'll just creep out an' up the mountain a bit; it's not fur I'll go, but it's as well to be on the safe side, them villians 'ud shlip by us unbeknownst may be, ef we hadn't a look out, yer honour, an' ef I'm wanted, a screech like a night hawk 'ull bring me in less than no time; you know the screech, sirr, for I've heerd you give it, beggin' yer honours' pardon.'

'Yes, Pat, we both know it,' said Findon, 'and if you want us, you must give the same signal.'

'Faix I will so! why wouldn't I? and now to business, jintlemen.'

So saying, Pat quitted the tower, and 'the Brothers' watched him crawling quietly up the side of the mountain till he was lost in the darkness.

In the meantime Noodle, followed closely by Archie and Monk, held his way steadily and (considering the nature of the ground) quickly up the mountain, in a contrary direction to that which led to O'Neil's tower.

For full half-an-hour they continued to advance without a word being spoken, at length Noodle stopt; Archie was at his side in a moment: 'What is it, Noodle? do you see anything?' he whispered.

Noodle pointed with his hand straight before him.

'I can see nothing,' said Archie, as he peered into the surrounding gloom, endeavouring vainly to discover what Noodle was pointing at, 'what is it?'

'Sheep,' said Noodle; 'one, two, three, don't you see 'em, Capt'in?'

'No—stop—yes I believe I do; are they dead or alive, Noodle? for they don't move.'

'Alive; Monk don't growl.'

'And if any one had been here and killed the sheep, Monk would have smelt them out, eh, Noodle? By Jove, you're not half the fool people take you for, and you know Monk better than I do, I think.'

Noodle patted the dog's head.

'Monk and Noodle sleep together whiles, an' talk together whiles; Noodle and Monk ole frens.'

'So it seems, and what's to be done now, Noodle?'

'Wait where we bees, Capt'in, may be they'll come by-and-bye.'

They crept behind a large rock, Monk crouching at their feet, and for full an hour they sat listening to every sound, and straining their eyes at every gleam of moonlight.

'This is cold work, Noodle,' said Archie, tired out with his long vigil, 'let's make a move and look for the fellows somewhere else.' He was rising as he spoke, when at the same instant Monk, lifting his head from between his paws, uttered a low, deep growl.

'Down, good dog! gently Monk!' said Archie under his breath, laying his hand on the dog's head.

'There's some one about, depend upon it,' he whispered; 'don't move or utter a sound till I tell you mind, Noodle.'

'Noodle's too great a fool to make a noise; it's only wise folk makes a noise,' was the answer.

'Do you hear anything, Noodle?' Archie whispered.

The 'Innocent' shook his head, but again a low grumbling growl from Monk made them both redouble their endeavours to detect the cause of the dog's uneasiness.

For several minutes they sat intently listening, to catch, if possible, the faintest indication of the approaching footstep, for that a footstep *was* approaching, neither of the watchers had the smallest doubt.

At length the 'Natural' put his hand upon Archie's arm . . .

'I hear, Noodle, it's the cry of a hare; something has got hold of it,—a weasel or a fox perhaps.'

Noodle chuckled silently. 'It's t'cry of big Ben Brady,' he said; 'hark, Capt'in!'

The crow of an old cock-grouse was now heard in an opposite direction to that of the wounded hare.

'Ha, ha! ould grouse crow very late,' observed Noodle.

'Another signal, eh?' said Archie, 'we are surrounded then.'

'Sheep are, that's why they come so.'

'Oh, ho! I see. Now mind, Noodle, mind what I say; take hold of your pistol so, by the barrel, and knock any man down with the butt end who won't give himself up quietly; do you understand?'

'Yes, but why not fire, him first, Capt'in, thin knock down?'

'Because the pistol has no lock, and you can't fire.'

Noodle looked disgusted when he discovered the true state of the weapon, but he clutched hold of the barrel firmly, and was evidently quite prepared to follow Archie's pacific directions to the letter.

Steps were now distinctly heard approaching beyond the sheep, and also behind the watchers, along the very path by which they had themselves ascended the mountain.

'Those fellows will pass close by us, Noodle,' whispered Archie, 'but don't stir hand or foot unless they see us, let them go by quietly; as soon as they seize a sheep we'll be at them, not before; I hope Monk will lie still.'

Monk seemed equally aware with his master of the necessity for silence; he had ceased growling, but his head turned eagerly from one side to the other, as the sound of approaching footsteps became more audible; his eyes gleamed with intelligence, and every hair on his back bristled up, as he crouched down ready to spring upon the intruders.

In a few moments two men were dimly discernible stealing quietly and cautiously along; they stopt on reaching the rock behind which Archie and Noodle were concealed.

'There they are!' was uttered in a low voice.

Archie was on the point of jumping up and collaring the men, under the impression that he was discovered, when the same voice continued—'One, two, three, just where I know'd I'd find 'em; come along! asy now! Ben's crawlin' up t'other side, if look houlds we'll nab 'em all.'

They passed on.

'Lie down, Monk!' whispered Archie, placing his hand on the dog's head and pressing him down, for he had half risen, and was trembling with excitement.

Monk obeyed with loving compliance, but his white glistening teeth chattered with eagerness.

Noodle sat silent, with his eyes fixed on Archie, waiting for the word of command—it was not long in coming.

* * * *

A rush of feet was heard—a scuffle—a savage oath—and a timid 'baa-aa.'

'Now,' cried Archie, springing to his feet, 'up! and at 'em, Monk!'

It was a needless order—the moment Archie's hand was removed from his head the dog rushed forward with a fierce growl, and before either Archie or Noodle could reach the spot, a dreadful imprecation, followed by a cry of pain, told them that Monk was already at work.

In a few seconds they were in the midst of the fray, but, with the exception of the dog and his victim, not a living creature was to be seen—the men were in full retreat, as the sound of falling stones and retiring footsteps plainly showed. It would have been worse than useless to attempt to follow the enemy in the dark, especially amongst mountains so much better known to the marauders than to their pursuers. Archie therefore was obliged to be satisfied with the captive they had made. The man was more frightened than hurt, having had the sense to lie still, when Monk bore him to the ground; had he struggled or resisted, the white teeth which were within an inch of his throat would, doubtless, have been speedily buried in it.

'Come, my man! stand up!' said Archie. The man hesitated, he still seemed to feel the dog's hot breath upon his cheek and to hear his savage growl. He shuddered—'The dog, your honour,' he whispered.

'He will not touch you—down Monk—let him alone.' Monk stretched himself at full length, and rested his head between his paws, but he never took his eyes from the man's face for an instant.

'You need not fear the dog,' said Archie, 'that is unless you try to escape—then indeed . . .'

'I'll not try, Capt'in, I'll not indeed, but are yees shure the baste will not worry me if I rise?'

It took Archie both time and trouble to re-assure him, but at length he was induced to stand up.

'Do you know him, Noodle?—I don't,' said Archie, regarding his prisoner attentively.

Noodle shook his head; he had never seen him before, he was a stranger.

'And what made *you* a sheep-killer, friend?' asked Archie sternly.

There was no answer.

'Come, Noodle,' he continued, after waiting in vain for a response, 'lead the way back to the tower—you, sir, follow him. Monk and I will bring up the rear, and remember, at the slightest attempt at escape on your part, this dog will be at your throat.'

Monk growled his approval of the plan. The prisoner remained silent but obeyed the order, and thus they started on their return to join their friends.

# CHAPTER XIV.

## THE NIGHT WATCH.

KATE and Baby sat in their room watching. It was very late, past twelve o'clock, but they could not go to bed. Archie and 'the Brothers' had not yet returned, and they were getting frightened.

The two girls had had a long and deep outpouring of their feelings that evening; the tenderest, the dearest, the most sacred feelings of a woman's heart had been blushingly acknowledged, amidst smiles and tears, and close, close embraces.

Yes! they loved and were beloved.

On that very evening words had been whispered into the ears of the sisters, which had caused every pulse to beat, every nerve to tingle, and had sent the warm blood racing over face, neck, and bosom.

Papa was to be spoken to to-morrow.

He would have been told the happy tale that night, or anything approaching to deception was as foreign to the nature of those young and generous hearts, as dead leaves to a living branch; but fate, in the similitude of Noodle Duggins, had willed it otherwise;—even as the poor 'Innocent' entered the kitchen of Ballyblunder, the magical words 'I love you' were trembling on the lips and tingling in the ears of, perhaps at that moment, the four happiest persons in the universe.

Never had Archie's approach been so little appreciated either by his sisters or his friends, as when, hot with Noodle's news, he burst into the music-room. He was too much excited himself to observe anything that was going on, or he would scarcely have had the heart to urge 'the Brothers' leaving the warmth within for the cold without;—but he saw nothing; and they, how could they refuse to join him?—so eager as they had often expressed themselves to be for a 'touch at the sheep-killers.'

And so they tore themselves away from the sunshine in which their hearts were basking, and sought the bleak hill-side of Slaughmacuish; the hands so lately clasped by soft and fairy fingers, now grasped a shillelah. And as they strode out into the dark night, and listened to Noodle's tale and Archie's vows of vengeance, they scarcely comprehended what they heard.

If Findon was in the seventh heaven of bewilderment and bliss, Fanshawe was in the eighth, for he had drunk a still deeper draught of love:—he had returned to the house for something left behind, and, meeting Baby in the hall, had strained her wildly to his breast and imprinted one long, long kiss of love upon her quivering lips.

Why did he strain her so wildly to his heart? Why did he look so sadly into her eyes? He could not have told her had she asked him.

Baby's face was covered with blushes when he left her, but ere the glow of that passionate embrace had passed away, a cold shudder swept through her frame, and her eyes dilated with an undefined feeling of terror as her betrothed disappeared through the closing door.

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'How late it is! Oh, Kate, I am so frightened, so nervous to-night.'

'My darling Baby! how pale and wretched you look! Why are you frightened? what are you afraid of?'

'I cannot tell, but I fear something will happen, something dreadful.'

'There is nothing to be afraid of—nothing more than usual. The last time Archie was out after those horrid sheep-killers he did not come home till much later than this.'

'I know—I know all that—I cannot reason about it. I cannot tell why, but I feel as though something dreadful were going to happen; it is very foolish of me, but I cannot shake it off.'

She got up and went to the window for the twentieth time.

The night was starlight, but the moon had gone down, and so had the wind—it was very still. Baby leaned out of the window as far as she could stretch and listened eagerly; there was not the sound of a living creature moving.

She sighed heavily. ‘I can hear nothing,’ she said, ‘and the night is so calm and still, that I am sure I should hear the sound of their footsteps a mile off.’

‘I dare say they will not be back for two or three hours,’ replied Kate quietly; ‘shut the window please, Baby, the night air is quite cold.’

‘I don’t feel it cold, Kate, do you?’

‘Yes, my Baby-bunting.’ She wound her arm around her sister, kissed her poor white, icy cheek, shut the window, and drew her towards the arm-chair by the fire.

Baby’s fears had raised a feeling of alarm in Kate also, but she determined not to show it for her sister’s sake, who was evidently in a state of great nervous anxiety, and besides she did not really think there was any cause for alarm.

‘Come, Baby darling! come and lie down on the bed and let me rock you to sleep; I am so tired and so sleepy.’

‘Baby obeyed, for though she felt neither tired nor sleepy, she would not be so selfish as to keep Kate up.

Cunning Kate! she guessed as much.

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The clock struck three. Kate’s gentle, steady, even breathing proclaimed her fast asleep. The flush on her cheek and the smile on her lips seemed to tell of happy dreams. The lips moved, a name was murmured, so low, so softly, so tenderly! and the flush deepened and spread over brow and neck, and her breathing came quicker; suddenly a change passed over her countenance, she turned very pale, gasped for breath, and with a slight scream started and awoke. Where was Baby? A cold gust of wind from the open window answered the question.

Baby was at her old post, and so intently watching and listening, that she had not heard Kate's scream of terror.

'Baby! Baby!' she cried, 'you will catch your death of cold; shut the window, dear, and come back.'

Baby turned for a moment, 'They are coming,' she cried, speaking rapidly and wildly, and again she was leaning half out of the window.

Kate sprang from the bed and joined her sister; she listened eagerly, 'I don't hear them,' she said.

'They are a long way off, and they are coming very, very slowly.' Baby spoke in such an unnatural, hollow tone, that Kate for the first time felt really frightened. She listened again, still more eagerly.

'I hear them now,' she whispered. They both spoke in whispers; poor girls! the shadow of coming evil was upon their hearts. 'I hear footsteps on the road far, far off, but the tramp is so regular and so slow, more like soldiers than—than Archie and the others. It cannot be they.'

'It is; he is hurt and they are carrying him home.'

Baby spoke calmly, but the big tears chased each other down her cheeks, and her lips quivered.

'Oh Baby! how can you speak so confidently? so dreadfully? you cannot tell, you cannot know!'

Baby pressed her hand to her heart, and looking into her sister's face so piteously, so mournfully, that Kate shuddered to see her, she whispered,—

'I *do* know that something dreadful has happened, my heart has told me so all night, ever since they went out, ever since he left me; I pray to God that it may not be the worst.'

She sank down on her knees as she spoke, and with her pale, sad face raised towards Heaven, she breathed a short, earnest prayer.

Again she was at the window, and now the approaching footsteps were distinctly heard. Baby, whose perceptions were rendered painfully acute by love and fear, instantly perceived that they were walking as noiselessly as possible; that they were endeavouring to reach the house unheard and unseen; that they were carrying a weight, a heavy weight, and therefore they trod heavily and slowly.

These thoughts passed with the rapidity of lightning through Baby's mind, she felt convinced of their truth, and her heart sank within her.

Kate could no longer blind herself to the fact that an accident had occurred. The party had turned off the road, and approached the house by a private path which led through a plantation.

'Kate!' said Baby suddenly, 'I can bear this no longer, I *must* go and meet them!'

'Oh yes, yes! I will go too,' cried her sister now thoroughly alarmed; 'they have stopt, and some one, I think Archie, is coming towards the house. Oh! what can have happened.'

They hastily seized their shawls, and leaving the room, hurried down stairs with trembling steps.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FATAL SHOT.

NOODLE strode along, as quickly as the nature of the ground would permit, towards O'Neil's tower, followed by the prisoner and Archie, Monk acting as rear-guard.

They had not gone more than a hundred yards, when the report of a gun was distinctly heard.

The party instantly halted.

'That shot was somewhere near O'Neil's tower, only rather higher up the hill-side,' said Archie, after listening attentively for some minutes. 'Hurry on, Noodle! look alive, man! never mind making a noise now, but get on as quickly as you can.'

'Only one shot,' he muttered to himself as he pursued the retreating figure of Noodle, who, with bent knees and shambling gait, was rapidly descending the hill; 'only one shot and no harm may be done, but it must have been fired by one of those scoundrels, for we have not a pistol amongst us.'

He hurried on, anxious and troubled in mind, he could scarcely tell why, that shot still rang unpleasantly in his ear. He had heard no sound after it, no cry, but perhaps the distance might be too great; no, he felt certain that the sound of a fray, ay, even one solitary cry, would have reached them through the stillness of the night; but again, the shot might have missed its mark;—true, but it might *not*. Archie, like Baby, had a presentiment of evil which he could neither account for nor shake off.

In an incredibly short space of time, considering the uncertain light and the rough road, they reached O'Neil's tower; they rushed into the low cavern-like room—it was empty.

'Purdy! Fin! Fan!' cried Archie, at first softly, but raising his voice as he repeated the names. There was no response.

He hastily left the tower and gave the signal cry:—shrill and clear it pierced the surrounding silence, and before the sound had died away in the distance, an answering 'Halloo' was heard.

Calling to Noodle to follow him, and whistling to Monk, who was crouched down directly in front of the prisoner, Archie dashed up the hill-side at a furious pace. To Noodle's remonstrance against leaving the captive at liberty to depart, Archie paid no attention, but pressed on up the steep and rocky path like one possessed, only pausing, occasionally, to repeat his cry and receive the answering shout, to direct him on his way.

After a short but sharp burst, that would have tried the lungs and the legs of the best 'gillie' that ever trod heather, he fancied he saw the figure of a man standing upon a rock, and stooping forward as though in search of something; he made straight for the spot, and in a few seconds stood by the man's side, breathless and almost speechless from the desperate efforts he had made.

'Hould hard, sirr! for God's sake hould hard!' said Pat Purdy, laying hold of Archie and drawing him back, 'we're on the very brink of a precipidge, Capt'in, an' I misdoubt there's bin mischief here a-way already this night.'

'What has happened?' gasped Archie. 'Mr. Findon, Mr. Fanshawe,—where are they?'

'Mr. Findon is not fur off, Capt'in, he just turned the corner of that big rock as you come up, he's looking for—faix here's himself!'

Archie sprang to meet him; 'Where's Fan?' he cried.

Findon shook his head; 'I don't know, we are looking for him.'

'Don't know! why? how is that? tell me, Fin, what has happened?'

Findon was evidently much agitated and alarmed; he told Archie that soon after he and Noodle had left them, Pat Purdy went out to reconnoitre;—that Fanshawe became impatient, and at length determined to go and look out too; he purposely took a different direction from that taken by Pat, saying it would give a double chance of catching the fellows. He (Findon) had remained behind, not liking to leave the tower without a guard in case of the sheep-killers making their appearance; Fanshawe had not been gone more than a quarter-of-an-hour when a shot was heard in the direction he had taken. Findon added, that he had instantly started up the hill-side, had overtaken Pat Purdy, who was also hastening towards the spot whence the sound seemed to come, and that they had both been searching anxiously for Fanshawe ever since, but could neither see nor hear anything of him. That was all he knew; it was very strange, 'very alarming' he might have added, for he thought so, though he did not like to say it.

'Have you called him?—have you . . .'

'Oh yes, I have shouted myself hoarse, but can get no answer.'

'Strange! but now what's to be done? Pat, what's to be done? there's no use standing here doing nothing.'

'We'd best thry to creep roun' the showlder av this big rock, Capt'in, an' so down till the bottom av the precipidge, jontlemen, but it must be fair an' asy, fair an' asy av you plaze, or we'll be gettin' the necks bruck aff av us—faix we will *so!*'

'Do you think he has fallen over here?' asked Findon in a low tone.

'I dunna for certain, sirr, bud I think it likely, an' I dunna whar else to look for him; by the same token I wish we'd more light; asy, Capt'in Archie!

tare an' ages—asy, sirr! wait a bit, Capt'in, till I shows yer honour the way; it's safest, shure I know iviry inch av . . . Holy mother, what's this?'

Well might he so cry out.

Archie, instead of descending the face of the rock according to Pat Purdy's directions, had turned somewhat to the left; he had scarcely gone two yards when an object still further to the left caught his eye; he sprang wildly forward, for the sight of that object, gleaming ghastly in the surrounding gloom, chilled his heart. In a few seconds he was gazing down upon the cold, white face of a dead man.

Yes! there he lay at full length upon the heather, stark and rigid in death—his brow was contracted, his eyes, from which all intelligence was rapidly passing away, had a look of terror in them still, and the light and life, which had so lately shone there, were fast giving place to the darkness and film of death.

The cause was but too apparent. A small, blue mark in the centre of the forehead, proclaimed the passage of a bullet—that mark, and a thin red line leading from it in an irregular course down the face, were the only visible indications of violence; but they were enough, the bullet had penetrated the brain, and death must have been instantaneous.

Findon stood by the body, and looked upon his only brother—now stiffening in death.

He then knelt by his side and gazed long and eagerly into his face—not a muscle moved:—he lifted his hand, and it fell back again with a dull, heavy, nerve-less sound. Yes! Fanshawe was dead;—no one doubted it from the first, no one watched for a sign of returning life, all felt that life was gone, never more to return, in this world, to the still motionless body at their feet.

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They raised him up tenderly, gently, as though afraid to awaken him from his deep sleep, and they bore him over the rough ground silently, carefully.

Alas! poor Fanshawe! his race was run! In an instant, like a flash of lightning, death had overtaken him. In an instant had the spirit been wrenched from its earthly tenement—in an instant had the living, breathing, moving man, become a lifeless, motionless clod of earth.

It was a fearful doom—a terrible transition—terrible at all times, and under all circumstances;—but how much more terrible, coming without one note of warning, one moment for prayer and penitence.

As Fanshawe Fortescue climbed the hill to meet his death-blow, his thoughts were far from the rough and rugged scene around him, farther still from blood and murder. True, he was in pursuit of lawless men, but his mind followed not his footsteps. His heart was warm with love, his thoughts were full of his great happiness. Baby's sweet innocent face was ever before him. He seemed to feel her breath upon his cheek, her kiss upon his lips, the beating of her heart against his, as he pressed her in that farewell embrace—the first and the last.

He breathed a prayer for his darling Baby, and he thanked God for giving her to him, and he climbed higher up the hill with a heart full of love, joy, peace, and gratitude;—and thus he died.

'*Requiescat in puce.*'

Slowly and silently they returned to O'Neil's tower: even Noodle was subdued by the presence of death.

On reaching their halting-place, they laid the body on the ground, and then, for the first time, the eyes of Archie and Findon met.

They grasped each other's hands, big tears were slowly rolling down their cheeks.

'God comfort you, Fin! I can't,' said Archie in a voice trembling with suppressed grief.

Findon uttered not a word, a spasm of pain contracted his features; he pressed Archie's hand convulsively, and hastily left the tower.

We will not follow, we will not intrude upon the fearful agony which shook the soul of the strong man.

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In the course of an hour they again resumed their sad journey. Pat Purdy and Noodle had brought a hurdle covered with sacking from a neighbouring cabin, upon which they placed the body of Fanshawe. They proceeded slowly, frequently had they to set down their sorrowful burden,—this sudden blow had prostrated their strength.

At length they reached the plantation which skirted the grounds around Ballyblunder. Here they again halted.

'Archie,' said Findon, speaking for the first time, 'I dread going to the house—poor Baby! it will kill her.'

'Poor Baby! yes it will be a great shock to her; but still she may not care for him so much as we imagine.'

'Care for him, Archie! they were engaged!'

'Engaged! and I not know it!'

'No one had time to know it; it was last evening only that we both pleaded for what we loved dearer than life. Kate has promised to be mine, and Baby was to have been *his!* We should have told you, Archie, on the road to-night,' he resumed, 'but we thought your father and mother ought to be the first informed of our engagement.'

'You were quite right, Fin,—quite, who could have foreseen this dreadful blow! But now we must get into the house as quietly as possible, to avoid waking any of the family. I will go round to the back door, which they do not always lock at night—at all events I can knock up the servants.'

'I am afraid there are those awake who had better be asleep,' muttered Archie to himself as he cautiously approached the house; 'if I am not mistaken I saw a white figure leaning out of the window of the girls' room.'

He was within twenty paces of the door when it suddenly opened. 'I thought so—I was sure of it,' he muttered.

In a moment his sisters were by his side. Kate looked terrified, Baby hopeless—she was the first to speak.

'Let me know all,' she said in a strange unnatural tone; 'tell me the truth, tell me the worst at once, oh, Archie! quick, quick!'

She clasped her hands tightly to her bosom, and looked up with such a piteous, such a despairing countenance, that tears streamed from Archie's eyes at the sight.

'Dearest, dearest Baby,' he said as he drew her gently towards him and kissed her icy cheek.—The tale seemed told.

A piercing scream arrested his words;—the poor girl's eyes distended with horror—again and again that fearful shriek, when, with a sudden and violent effort, she tore herself from her brother's arms, and flew towards the plantation.

In vain he called to her to stop. On she ran, her long hair streaming over her shoulders, her arms tossed wildly in the air; on, on she ran: Findon recognized her, and started forward trying to intercept her: madly, fiercely she dashed him from her, and in another moment she was kneeling beside her lover's corpse, gazing upon the face of the dead!

It was enough—her brain reeled, her heart stood still. No cry, no word, no sound escaped her lips, but swaying backward and forward as she knelt, she fell upon the body of her betrothed, and lay to all appearance as lifeless as he upon whom she rested.

They untwined her arms from around his neck; she struggled not, she knew not what they did, consciousness had left her. They raised her face from the cold and clammy cheek of the dead—what do they see? the corpse is bathed in blood! Has that close embrace, that desperate strain brought back life to the dead?

Alas no! the life-blood that stains those ghastly features is from the heart of the still-breathing girl, who lies crushed and helpless in her brother's arms. The purple stream still wells slowly from her parted lips, dabbling her neck and bosom.

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# CHAPTER XVI.

## 'THE DEVIL'S LEAP.'

IT will be remembered that a prisoner had been taken by Archie. This man, a stranger to that part of the country, had been left in O'Neil's tower unguarded, and had, as a matter of course, made his escape. In the horror and confusion which followed upon the finding of Fanshawe's body, the man's very existence was forgotten; and afterwards, when it occurred to Archie that his prisoner was gone, he cared very little about it; he was not one of their 'boys,' and would no doubt make the best of his way back to his own country,—so he dismissed the subject from his thoughts.

But the man, by name James Horrigan, had not, as Archie imagined, quitted the neighbourhood. The moment the coast was clear, he left O'Neil's tower, and followed the retreating footsteps of Archie and Noodle up the side of the mountain.

Horrigan was a wild lawless fellow enough,—sky-larking amongst the sheep was one thing, but shooting a man was another; he did not know much of Ben Brady, and the little he knew he disliked, for Brady was evidently inclined to be both brutal and savage, not likely to stand upon trifles when interfered with or thwarted. Horrigan had, of course, heard the shot that had attracted Archie's attention; like him, too, he had been struck by the dead silence which followed it,—there was no shouting, no second report: he therefore determined, when left alone in the tower, to follow his captors, and aid, if necessary, in their search, even at the risk of his own re-capture. Accordingly he skulked about under the shadow of the rocks and watched their proceedings.

He heard Pat Purdy's cry of horror on first discovering the body of Fanshawe, and creeping up to the edge of a rock overhanging the ledge where the party had assembled round the dead man, he too looked upon his face.

Why does he start, and tremble, and clench his fists? He casts a rapid glance at the group beneath him; the sight of Findon confirms that which scarcely needed confirmation, he recognizes 'the Brothers.' They had once done him a service, the remembrance of which had sunk deep into his heart; and now what does he see! one of his benefactors dead—murdered—before him!

When they took the body away, Horrigan still remained on the rock; a burning thirst for vengeance seized him; he, whose pale and ghastly face he had just looked upon, had saved his life—he swore to avenge his death.

How long he had stood transfixed with grief and horror, he could not tell, but as he was about to move away, the sound of heavy breathing close above him, met his ear;—and then the clattering of loose stones—some one was approaching. He was not long kept in doubt; the head of a man suddenly appeared over the edge of the rock under which he stood, and was as quickly withdrawn;—not however before he was recognized.

'Ben,' said Horrigan, 'is that you?'

The head was once more visible.

'Who is that?' was growled forth.

'Jim Horrigan.'

'Is anybody with you?' was cautiously asked.

'No, who would be with me?'

'What the —— are you doin' there then? standing like a crow on a cliff?' said Ben with an oath.

'*I'm* doin' nothin', Ben, what have *you* been doin'?'

'What the ——'s that to you, come away! it's time we war off out of this.'

Jim Horrigan was a brave man, but as he sprung up the rock and stood face to face with Ben Brady, he felt that he might shortly be lying on the damp heather, as still and cold as he upon whom he had so lately gazed.

He knew Ben Brady to be a far stronger man than himself; he also knew that he was well-armed, savage and merciless; and yet, though unarmed himself, except with a stout blackthorn (his never-failing companion), he determined not only to tax Ben with the murder of Fanshawe, but if possible to take him prisoner.

To attempt this until Ben was thrown off his guard, would be madness; but could he succeed in distracting his attention, one good blow with his trusty shillelah might do the business.

The two men looked each other in the face; the moon was still shining, and her light fell full upon the spot where they stood.

The expression of Horrigan's eye was not to be mistaken, it said plainly, 'Thou art the man!'

Ruffian though Ben was, he had never before done so dark a deed; it was his first murder. He quailed for an instant, but only for an instant, before the steady, searching gaze of his companion.

'What the —— do you look at me in that way for?' he asked savagely.

'It's a bad job, Ben; why did you shoot the poor jintleman?'

'Why did I? becase he laid a hoult av me! an' by the etarnal! I'll sarve you the same av you offer to touch me, an' may be av you don't,' he muttered.

'I'm not offering to touch you, an' I'm not afraid of you shooting me; two murders in one night! no no! you couldn't do it.'

'Murdther!' said Ben hoarsely, 'who dar call it murdther? It war in self-defence I shot him; shure he collared me!'

'Oh well, then in coorse you'll give yourself up, and say it was an accident, and everything will come right,' said Horrigan simply and quietly.

Ben turned visibly paler at the bare idea of giving himself up; he came a step nearer to Horrigan and cocked the pistol which he still held.

'Of coorse I'll do nothin' of the sort thin, Jim Horrigan; av I said 'twar an accidint who 'ud b'lieve me? can you tell me that now?'

'Why not? shure if *I* b'lieve you, why wouldn't others?'

A mocking smile crossed Horrigan's lip as he spoke. The next instant he was stretched senseless on the ground by a blow from the butt end of Ben's pistol; he fell close to the rock,—a savage kick sent him over it.

The murderer leant forward and peered into the depths below; it was too dark to see anything, but he heard the sound of a heavy body as it struck against the projecting rocks in its descent; at length all was still. 'It must have reached the bottom,' he thought, and he well knew that no human being would reach it and live, for the fall was fully two hundred feet.

Ben Brady stood erect; he was alone, and for the present safe, but he trembled violently, and cold drops of perspiration stood on his brow. 'Two murders in one night!—two murders in one night,' rang in his ear.

Hurrying from the spot, the wretch pursued his way down the mountain with rapid but faltering steps. The deeds he had done already cast their shadows over his soul; he strove by oaths and curses to banish the terror which oppressed him; to drown the hideous phantoms of blood, and guilt, and death, by frequent and deep draughts of whiskey, as he struggled and staggered along over the rugged path down the mountain side. But it would not do,—'Two murders in one night!—two murders in one night!' ever rang in his ear.

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Jim Horrigan, stunned by the blow from Ben's pistol, fell over the edge of the precipice, a senseless, dull, and inert mass. About thirty feet from the top he struck against a projecting ledge with such violence, as to dislodge a large fragment of rock embedded in the tangled roots and fibres of a stunted oak, which overhung the depths below. Down thundered the displaced rock—down—down—down to the bottom with a 'thud' as it struck the earth, a sound anxiously listened for and heard by the ruffian on the platform above.

But Horrigan followed not the rock he had displaced; he had fallen into the stunted oak itself, the branches of which arrested his further descent, at least for the present. How long he remained in a state of insensibility, he could not tell, but when consciousness again dawned upon him, the night was also awakening from sleep, and the light of heaven in the east proclaimed the coming day.

It was several minutes before Horrigan could realize his position, 'Where was he?—how came he there?'

He was lying on his back, jammed in between the fork of two strong branches;—this then had saved his life; for, senseless as he was when he fell, he was unable to help himself, and could not have held on with hands powerless to act.

He looked up: clouds floating in a clear, pearly sky, and faintly tinged with the ruddy hues of the rising sun, alone were perceptible, all else was enveloped in a thick mist; he strove to turn round, but could only partially do so:—again he looked up, and now the dark mass which rose as a wall before him, re-assumed its earthly shape, the morning mists rolled away, and the steep and rugged side of the precipice met his astonished gaze.

'Had he fallen down that?—it must be so!' He remembered in a moment all that had happened: the finding the dead body of Fanshawe, his meeting with Ben the murderer, and the blow with the pistol; he could recall nothing more, but the rest was easily guessed. The villain had thrown him over the precipice as a sure preventive to his telling what he, and he alone, knew of Fanshawe Fortescue's murder: and how mercifully, how miraculously had he been preserved, so far preserved. He shuddered to think of his fearful position, for this was not the first time he had been upon Slaughmacuish, and he well knew 'The Devil's Leap,' as these precipitous rocks, over which he had been thrown, were called.

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And now it is broad daylight, and Horrigan, whose mental faculties had for a time been utterly prostrated by the discovery of his awful situation, endeavoured to collect his scattered senses. He could not remain where he was, he *must* try to move. With great difficulty he managed to turn himself half round, though in so doing, a sharp crack in one of the branches upon which he rested, warned him to be careful. . . . .

He looked below and his heart stood still;—fully one hundred and fifty feet from where he hung suspended in mid-air, a few mountain sheep were browsing amongst the long grass and heather—*there* would be his first landing-place if he fell from his present position. Well might his cheek blanch with terror. Death, certain death seemed to await him—he must either starve where he lay, or lose his hold and be dashed to pieces in his fall.

To reach the top of the cliff seemed impossible. True it was not much more than thirty feet from where he was, but how was that perpendicular rock to be scaled? He riveted his eyes upon the few yards that lay between him and safety. He scanned with an eager look every crevice, every projection, every inequality on the black and rugged surface.

How eagerly, how anxiously he sought for some possibility of escape from the dreadful doom which slowly, but surely, seemed setting over him:—not one shadow of hope, not one chance of escape presented itself.

And so the morning wore away:—the sun was high in the heavens and poured its rays upon the bare head of the wretched man, as he lay pale and exhausted in his fearful cradle. He strove to cry out, but the sound died upon his lips, suffering and fear had paralyzed his tongue; his throat was parched and burning, his brain reeled. Shout! he could but whisper,—indistinctly whisper. The prolonged agony of his soul had well nigh deprived him of life.

To hang for hours over a fall of a hundred and fifty feet!—to feel that at any one moment of those long and tedious hours, his frail support might give way and he be hurled to destruction, would blanch the cheek of many a brave man who would not hesitate to mount a rampart in the face of a thousand foes.

James Horrigan was a brave man; and though latterly he had fallen into bad company and been led astray by evil counsels, he had naturally a good heart, and in his youth he had been carefully and religiously brought up. And now in his hour of need, when he suddenly and unexpectedly stood face to face with death, how the days of his infancy, ay! of his childhood, rose up before him, clearly and vividly as though they were but of yesterday!

The pale, gentle face of his sick mother, the bright black eyes of his sister, the rosy cheeks and curling hair of his little brother, and the quick, intelligent, loving eyes of poor 'Pincher' as he sat on the neat, clean cottage floor wagging his tail, and snapping at his little master's fingers, now mumbling them in his mouth, now pulling him round by the sleeve of his jacket, growling fiercely but looking affectionately the while—all these were minutely called to mind.

And now the scene is changed: He is kneeling at his mother's knee, Kathleen beside him: the mother has an arm round each dear child, and her sweet, pale face wears a kind, a loving, but a serious expression: the children are praying—Jim first, for he is the eldest by twelve months; he is repeating 'the Lord's Prayer,' and little Kathleen, with hands clasped together, and her large eyes fixed earnestly upon her mother, is waiting her turn.

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'It's many a year since I prayed,' sighed the unhappy man, as these visions of the past flitted across his memory.

'God forgive me! I am a great sinner, and now I must die!'

The idea of his spiritual danger banished for a time the terror at his perilous position, which had so overwhelmed him. His mother's exhortations and precepts, long, long forgotten or disregarded, were distinctly brought to mind.

'It is too late, it is too late,' he murmured: but a voice,—a small, clear, silvery voice,—whispered to his heart 'it is never too late to repent.'

Then he thought of his neglected Bible, and many passages were brought to his recollection, passages carefully taught by his mother, and which he had known by heart and loved to repeat, but which, like that dear mother's admonitions, had long been disregarded and forgotten.

Like 'the Thief on the Cross' he, too, might be saved, if he truly and from his heart repented. He felt and acknowledged this great, this inestimable gift of mercy, and his heart became 'as a little child's.'

Tears, hot and heavy, rolled down his cheeks: all thought of his fearful position passed from his mind: he fixed his eyes on the blue vault of heaven, whence he fancied the spirit of his angel-mother might be watching over him;—and he prayed long and fervently.

'God be merciful to me a sinner' went up from the parched lips of that poor lost creature to the throne of the Creator, and doubtless the prayer was heard and answered—for his heart seemed to overflow with love and gratitude. The crust and corrosion of years of folly and vice had been pierced in an instant by the Word of *God*, so long contemned and despised, and 'Faith, Hope, and Charity' gushed forth as a living stream of purest water, cleansing the soul and strengthening the body of the repentant sinner.

Yes, Horrigan was physically strengthened by the change that had come over his soul. He felt that his prayer had been heard, he no longer feared everlasting destruction. That he must die, a fearful, a horrible death, seemed inevitable, but the love of life was still strong within him (when does it ever leave us?), and he looked around with greater minuteness, to discover if it were, by any means, practicable to reach the top of the cliff. The tree into which he had fallen grew upon a ledge of rock which jutted out several feet from the face of the cliff, and, from the violence of the winds as they rushed in fierce eddying blasts over those savage cliffs, it had been bent and bowed from the perpendicular to almost a horizontal position, thus completely overhanging the precipice—a terrible cradle for a human being to be rocked in!

And now,—although the wind has died away, and scarcely a breath stirs in the calm evening air,—the tree oscillates backwards and forwards—it sways from side to side—it bends—it droops—lower and lower—lower and lower. 'Hark!' he cries, 'what is that splitting sound? Look! see! see that chasm—that opening seam!—wider and wider—wider and wider!—the rocks are separating! Oh God! I am lost! they gape! they gape! wider still—wider still—ha! I sink—they have parted! Lord have mercy!'

Ere the last word had left his lips, a vast mass of rock and earth, bearing the stunted oak and its living freight, was hurtling through the air. . . .

The horror of that fearful moment who can even imagine? It was the agony of years compressed into seconds!

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A crushing, whirling sound, like the blast of a hurricane,—a fearful concussion,—and all was still.

# CHAPTER XVII.

## MOTHER AND SON.

THE reader may remember, that Helen Fortescue and her mother had been invited to spend Christmas at Ballyblunder. The invitation had been accepted, and they were journeying thither, when they received an express, informing them of the fearful death of poor Fanshawe.

It was a sad meeting on both sides; how different from the 'merry Christmas' which had been anticipated!

Mrs. Fortescue strained Findon to her breast again and again, and thanked God that he, at least, was spared to her; but her eyes filled with tears whenever they rested upon him;—for every feature, every tone of his voice, every expression, every movement, seemed to bring her lost one bodily before her.

Findon knew this, and his heart ached to see that the wonderful resemblance between him and his twin brother, which had once been only a source of joy and merriment, was now, and he feared ever would be, a cause of pain and distress to his much-loved mother; his presence, he thought, only added to her sorrow.

But he wronged her in so thinking.

'No, my dearest boy,' she said, when one day he expressed his fear on this subject, 'I would not have one single feature or expression in your face different from what it is; and although the resemblance between you was such that I can never look upon *you* without thinking of *him*, I shall love you all the more, if it be possible, for that very resemblance. At first, when I felt almost crushed by the weight of my affliction, I repined, I rebelled, I murmured in my heart, if not in words, and then I own that I could scarcely bear you in my sight; but this feeling lasted only a very short time. I knew it was sinful, and I prayed earnestly for strength to cast out such thoughts, and strength was given me; and now, Findon, my own darling boy, my only fear is lest I should not be able to bear your being *out* of my sight.'

Mrs. Fortescue folded her son in her arms, and their tears of tenderness and love mingled in silence.

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He whom they mourned was in his grave, and a few fleeting weeks must bring to his side one who yearned to be there.

Baby was wasting away day by day, hour by hour, towards 'the land o' the leal'; but she lingered on longer than her friends dared to hope—to hope against hope—for they felt, they knew that the days of their darling were numbered, and yet they could not resign her. 'A happy release' are words uttered for another's woes; but oh! we cannot speak them when the pang is at our own hearts. The pain and suffering of one we love are hard to witness and hard to bear; but bitter indeed must the torture be, ere death can be desired by the mother, for the dying child over whom she watches; by the sister, who hovers around the death-bed of her second self!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE PURSUIT.

IT was past midnight; Findon Fortescue and Archie Kindly were walking up and down the road at the back of the house at Ballyblunder, recalling the past and planning for the future.

'It was just such a night as this six weeks ago that we were coming along this very road, Archie, with poor Fan's body, and I have not caught the murderer yet! Oh! Archie! Archie! I shall never sleep in peace till I see the rope round that scoundrel's neck.

Findon's eyes flashed, and he paced rapidly backwards and forwards.

'I fear he has escaped, Fin; we should have caught him before this if he had been in the barony.'

'Escaped! I don't believe it; I *won't* believe it. Why do you say that?'

'Because we must have caught him, as I said before, if he had not left the neighbourhood; besides he had plenty of time to get far enough before we had the police after him. If you only consider . . .'

'But I will *not* consider, Archie, and I cannot argue about it. I am certain that man is still in the country; I can't tell why, but I feel as sure of it as of my own existence, and by all my hopes of happiness in this world and the next, I will never rest till I have found him!'

'Well, well! be it so, Fin; I don't share your hopes of finding the villain, but I will share your labour in searching for him, as long as I can move one foot before the other.'

'I know you will, Archie, my dear friend, my best friend now; but we *shall* find him, never fear! and mind this,' (he placed his hand on Archie's shoulder, and grasped him with a force that made him wince,) 'I love your sister Kate, as you know, though you do not know how much,—I scarcely know that myself, but my every hope of earthly happiness is centered in her; and yet I swear to you that I will never marry her, never ask her to marry me, till I have that man's hand in mine *dead or alive*! Ha! what's that?'

Archie turned sharply round: two persons were seen to issue into the clear moonlight from the shade of the plantation. The moment our two friends were observed, the figures stopped, then a shrill and peculiar whistle was heard; Archie put the knuckle of his forefinger into his mouth and answered it. 'That's

Noodle's signal,' he said, 'we might have known they were friends by Monk's silence; we should have had a growl from him long before, had they been strangers.'

Monk put back his great lapping ears, smiled affectionately with his loving eyes, and held up one huge paw to be shaken.

'Good old fellow,' said Archie, shaking hands with him, and patting his fine bold head. 'Hullo! what now?'

With a fierce growl and a sudden bound, Monk started from the caressing hand of his master towards the advancing men.

'Asy now, Monk! tare an' ages, asy, me man! shure he's a fren' now, whativer he may have bin wunst. Arrah! keep back, Jim:—yer a gran' dog annyhow; an' it's meself's glad to see yees agin,—here now!—that's brave!' and Noodle flung his arms round Monk's neck, and hugged him as if he were the best friend he had in the world; and the dog licked the 'Innocent's' face, and wagged his tail, and seemed as pleased to see him as if he had been blessed with as many brains as a bishop, but still he looked suspiciously at Noodle's companion.

'Why, Noodle, where have you been for this long while? and who have you got there?' said Archie.

'Faix, Capt'in Archie, Noodle's dhry an' so is Jim, an' hungered too, an' so we'll jist go to the kitchen; may be Biddy 'ull have a cold praty an' a sup o' butther milk for the fool an' his fren';—ha! ha! which is the fool an' which is the fren'? can you tell me that, Capt'in?' and the boy looked up into Archie's face with a half-vacant, half-intelligent leer, whilst he twirled an old battered 'corbeen,' ornamented with feathers and bits of ribbon, round and round in his hands.

Poor Noodle! it would be difficult for even the learned to decide where thine intelligence ended, and thine idiotcy began; the boundary line is fixed by a higher power than thine, oh man! wise in thine own conceit; but, though invisible to thy contracted vision, to the Omniscient eye it is doubtless broad and plain.

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'It is rather late for supper, Noodle, but you shall have what we can find; but who is your friend? What's your name, my man, and what is your business?' said Archie turning to the stranger, who was standing a little behind Noodle.

'Who is he?' said the 'Innocent' before the man had time to reply, 'who 'ud he be at all bud hisself the craythur. Whisper, Capt'in; do you mind the boy we—that is Monk an' me—tuck the night Misther Fanshawe war kilt? do ye now?'

'Yes, yes, Noodle,' said Archie, shocked at the way he blurted out the name in Findon's face, for Noodle's was a true stage whisper.

'Ha! ha! how he struv and sthruggled; do ye mind how he sthruggled wid me, Capt'in? but it warn't av no use, I gruppit him *so* wid me two han's,—shure 'twas yerself taught me the grup, Capt'in Archie! divil another; an' by the same token, the divil hisself 'udn't get shut av me, perviso I wunst had a hoult av his weazan this a-way.'

And suiting the action to the word, he seized his friend by the collar, driving his knuckles into his throat with a force by no means agreeable.

Monk, taking it for a *bonâ fide* attack on the part of Noodle, bristled up instantly, and was on the point of springing upon the half-throttled stranger, when Archie interfered, and in a tone of authority bade the dog 'lie down.'

Findon also stepped forward to assist, but the man quietly disengaged himself from Noodle's rather too close embrace, saying, while he patted the 'Innocent' kindly on the head,—

'Asy now, Noodle, me man! an' let me spake to the gintlemen.'

'Horrigan!' said Findon in the utmost astonishment, 'is that you?'

'Faith it is, Misther Findon, and long life to you, sirr! I'm gladder to see your honor than a thousand-pound bank-note, so I am.'

The man held out his hand half bashfully, then hastily withdrew it, but Findon seized it in his own and shook it heartily.

'Horrigan,' he said, 'I am right glad to see you; we—that is I—have lost sight of you for the last three years; what have you been about?'

'About no good, Misther Findon,' replied Horrigan, steadily and firmly, but blushing for shame as he spoke.

'I am sorry for that, James—very sorry; why how is that? you used to be steady enough.'

'I got into bad company, sirr, and for the last three years, or over two annyhow, I have led an idle, worthless, vagabond life, and that's the truth; but,' turning towards Archie, 'I never meant to injure your sheep, sirr; though I'd been on Slaughmacuish many a time when I'd no business there, after hares and pattriges and the like; and it was so I first see Ben Brady, the murdtherin' villian! bad look to the night we met, and faith nothing bud bad look has come of it.'

'But how was it that you were on Slaughmacuish that—that night?' asked Findon, turning pale.

'I'll tell yer honor: I was on Slaughmacuish after the hares, I'll not deny that same, and I met Ben Brady, and sez he 'what have you killed, Jim?' 'Nothin' at all,' sez I, 'barrin' a small bird,'—I misremember it's name, but I showed it him. 'Pooh!' sez he contemptuous like, 'that's not worth the shot that killed it.' An' it's thrue for him, yer honor, 'twas not. 'Come with me,' sez he, 'an' I'll fill yer game-bag with heavier meat in ten minutes than you'll put into it in as many hours, an' without firing a shot too!'

'I had heard of the sheep-killing on Slaughmacuish, I'll not deny it, and I guessed what he meant. 'I don't want your sort of game,' sez I; 'I'm no butcher.'

With that he swore he meant no harrum to the sheep—*that* business was over, he said, and he was sorry he had ever had a hand in it. 'But,' sez he, 'whisper, I'll name no names, but I knows a man as is just mad becase no more sheep is to be killed, and he has offered anny of the boys a shilling an' a dhrink of whiskey who'll bring him a sheep dead or alive; an',' says he, 'I want to play him a thrick. See here!—here's cord to tie the baste's legs, and a sack to put him in; we'll carry him down the mountain fair an' asy,' sez he, 'an' we'll turn the baste loose into the parlour; an' by this an' by that,' sez he, 'I'll be bail that beside the shilling we'll get for bringing him the sheep, he will give us a dozen more to take it away again, an' so we will, an' no hort come to it the craythur!' Well, gintlemen, I was always fond of a bit of fun, an' I agreed to go along with him, but I meant no harrum to the sheep—it's Gospel-thruth I am telling yer honours.'

It was impossible to doubt him; the straightforward manly way in which he spoke, and his honest, open countenance, were conclusive evidence of the truth of his story. So, at all events, thought his hearers, especially Findon, who had long known him.

'I quite believe you,' said Archie, 'and I am glad to do so, since you seem known (and favorably) to Mr. Findon; but why are you here at this time of night?—not to tell us this surely?'

'No, sirr, my errand consarns you two gintlemen more nor it does meself, though it consarns meself too, by the same token that there's not a man on 'arth, barrin' Misther Findon, that has a better right to revinge the death of his kind an' generous brother, nor meself.'

The man spoke rapidly, almost fiercely, and his eyes sparkled with excitement, whilst the colour mounted high on his pale and sickly countenance.

Findon grasped his hand, for a few seconds he could not speak. At length in a choking voice, turning to Archie, he said, 'What he says is true, Archie, *he* did Horrigan a great service once, and now . . .'

'You both of you did, Misther Findon, you as well as he; God bless you both!' broke in Horrigan.

'Well, well, James, but tell me, you spoke just now of revenge, have you found that man?—quick!' Findon trembled with impatience.

'I have, leastwise Noodle has, an' I know where he is: asy, murdther! by the powers! you'll squeege my hand off, sirr!'

'You know where he is?' shouted Findon, regardless of everything but that fact. 'Come on, Archie! Oh, why did you not say this before, Horrigan? so much precious time wasted. He may have gone—come, Archie, lead the way, Jim!—quick! *quick!* QUICK!! I say!'

'Asy, Misther Findon, av you plaze, he'll not move from the hole he's in, never fear; an', to tell God's thruth, I couldn't walk that far without a bite an' a sup, yer honour. I'm a'most starved, an' so is Noodle, poor boy.'

'Noodle must have some praties, an' thin he'll go an' kill big Ben Brady,' said the 'Innocent.'

Findon, seizing hold of Horrigan, dragged him towards the house. 'Quick, quick!' he cried, 'you shall have plenty to eat and drink, only make haste—for the love of God! make haste.'

Archie tried to calm him, but in vain. The idea of his brother's murderer being almost within his grasp, and the fear of his escaping, nearly drove him wild. He walked incessantly to and fro in the kitchen, like a wild beast in a cage, eagerly eyeing Horrigan and Noodle as they ate—never before, he thought, did men eat so much or so slowly—by heavens! they must be doing it on purpose to vex him. He felt almost distracted, but his good-nature prevailed spite of all, as from time to time he exclaimed, 'Look alive, my men, have you nearly finished? don't hurry though, that is, eat as much as you wish.'

At length their appetites were satisfied.

Archie, on learning that Ben Brady was concealed on Slaughmacuish, had roused Kit Kelly, and told him to prepare the car; as much on account of the evident fatigue of Horrigan and Noodle, as to avoid further loss of time; and now Kit, putting his head into the door announced,—

'The car's to the fore, Capt'in, beyent the haggart, will I take it fair an' asy to the planteeshun?'

'Yes, Kit, but walk the mare, and go as quietly as you can.' Kit vanished.

'I thought it best not to start from the stable-yard for fear of noise, and it's as well to keep everything quiet till our return,' said Archie aside to Findon.

'Thank you, all right; I mean you are quite right, Archie. I scarcely know . . . now then, men! are you ready?'

There was sufficient moon to light them on their way, and they sped along at a slapping pace.

And now once off, Horrigan was referred to for an explanation as to the whereabouts of Brady, and how they had discovered him.

The reader is also, I trust, anxious to know how Horrigan escaped being dashed to pieces when he fell with the stunted oak into the depths below:—thus his story ran:

He told how, when left alone in O'Neil's tower, he had followed Archie and Noodle to assist them in their search, and how, after the party had left the fatal spot bearing away Fanshawe's body, Brady, the murderer, had appeared to him. Of what followed, up to the time of his fall from his dizzy height, the reader is already aware; we will therefore take up the narrative from that point.

'Oh, gintlemen, may you niver feel what I felt when I hurtled through the air, jammed in betwixt two branches and houlding on for the dear life. I muttered a prayer, and shut my eyes, 'it will be all over in a few seconds,' thinks I; there was a rushing sound in my ears, which nigh deafened me, thin a vi'lent shock, an' I was chucked clane out of the tree for a matter of ten or twelve yards, an', wonderful to relate, niver a strawheen the wuss for me fall, barrin' a scratch here an' there on me face an' hands.'

'Why, Jim, you must be mistaken as to the height, or I have misunderstood you; I thought you said the rocks were fully two hundred feet high, and that your first fall was not above thirty feet when the tree caught you.'

'So I did, Misther Findon, it's thrue for yer honour, them's me very words.'

'But you don't mean to say that you fell nearly, or quite, two hundred feet, not only without being dashed to pieces, but with no more hurt than a few scratches; you surely don't mean to say that, Horrigan?'

'Faith, Misther Findon, I do *so*, an divil a lie in it; more by token, here's meself to the fore in a whole skin, an' without a broken bone inside it!'

'I know those rocks well,' said Archie, 'they are called The Devil's Leap, and are, as he says, at least two hundred feet high; no human being could fall from within thirty feet of the top and live, the thing is simply impossible. I hope your assertion that you know where Brady is, has just the least taste in life of probability in it, my man, for we don't particularly want to go on a wild goose chase at this time of night, and after this wonderful story of yours,—you understand, eh?'

'Yes, sirr, I understand that you don't believe a word I've said, an' I'm not surprised nor offinded at that same, but for all that, thruth is thruth:—first an' foremost, Misther Findon, don't be afeard, as I persave you are, that I've misled you as to Brady's place of consalement; we'll have him fast this night dead or alive, as shure as that moon is shining in the heavens,—he can't escape us.'

'God grant you may be right, Horrigan!' was Findon's agitated reply.

'Archie! I never in my life knew Jim Horrigan tell a lie, and I have known him from a boy; go on, Horrigan,' he continued; 'never mind for the present how far you fell, but tell us quickly where Brady is, and how you know he has not gone away.'

'Thank your honour for the kind word you spoke for me:—Brady's in Coolan's Cave, shure the Capt'in knows it well? (Archie nodded an affirmative.) Me and Noodle watched him intil the cave over two hours since; he'll not stir ag'in this night, for he had a sack over his showlder an' a bottle of whiskey sticking out of his pocket, the murdtherin' villian! I sin him meself, an' I smelt the sperrit as he passed close forenint me; he'll not stir when wunst he gets a hoult of the whiskey.'

'Passed close to you,' said Findon, 'and you didn't seize him, how was that?'

'Becase, Misther Findon, 'twas onpossible; he come close enough for me to smell the sperrit, but not to touch him, or to reach him;—he was walking along a ledge of perpindikler rock which leads to the cave, an' I was crouching under the brushwood, not six feet below the ledge it's thrue, bud it was morally onpossible for me to catch a hoult of him.'

'Where was Noodle?' enquired Findon.

'Noodle was keeping watch at another pass, sirr; we knowed that Brady was hiding somewhere upon the mountain, but we had niver bin able to find out where till this very night. Well, sirr, no sooner had I sin the vagabone enter Coolan's Cave than I made right off for where Noodle was posted, an' I tould him what I'd sin. Now maybe, Misther Findon, an' you too, Capt'in, is surprised that we didn't go back an' take Brady then an' there; but that's easier said than done, leastwise for us two, for we had nothin' but a stout shillelah apiece, an' he, 'the raparee,' had a brace of pistols, for I had sin them meself that misfortinate night, you remember, gintlemen, more by token he bruck me head with one of 'em. It's thrue Noodle wanted to go in at him at wunst, an' it wasn't fear that kep' me back; but, sez I to meself, 'if the villian bates us both, as it's more nor likely he will, off he goes, an' maybe we'll niver hear nor see till him ag'in'; an' so I thought, (axing yer pardins, gintlemen,) that 'discrition was the better part of valour,' an' I determined to go at wunst to Ballyblunder an' spake to you, Misther Findon, or to the Capt'in, an' that's the whole of it.'

'Well done, Horrigan! well done indeed!' cried Findon, 'but would it not have been better if one of you had staid to watch the cave? he may have taken alarm and stolen away; it is not likely perhaps, but it is possible.'

'I thought of that, Misther Findon, I did indeed, sirr, an' I'll tell your honour why I didn't do it. I didn't like to remain meself and send him (pointing to Noodle), becase—(he sunk his voice) becase I mistrusted that he, poor boy, might forget the right message; an' I didn't like to lave him there, an' go meself, becase I couldn't trust him to keep quiet; as like as not he'd a marched into the cave, fair an' asy, an' laid hoult of Brady, an' thin he'd have bin murdthered, an' the brute baste would have escaped us: but niver fear, Misther Findon, he'll not escape us now, the divil a move he's moved.'

'I trust not, Horrigan. Archie, are we nearly there?'

'Yes, we'll soon be under O'Neil's tower now; there we must leave the car.'

Findon remained quiet for a few minutes, but he was in a fever of impatience, and could not bear the silence.

'Come Horrigan,' he said, 'tell us the rest of your adventures now, anything to pass the time; how was it you didn't break your neck down that place, and what became of you after your fall?'

'Well, Misther Findon, this is how 'twas. As soon as iver I recovered me surprise at finding meself alive, I picked meself up an' looked about me. There was the ould twisted tree, in which I had roosted so long, stan'ing as upright as a senthry, an' divil a ha'p'orth the wuss for the fall no more nor meself; faith it was the better for that same, for now it was straight, which it niver was afore. The thruth is, gintlemen, what saved the tree saved me, an' that was the tremenjus mass of 'arth an' rock that had fell down with it: if only a sod or two had fell, I must have bin dashed into smithereens, but as it was, the rock an' the 'arth, bein' heavier nor the tree, struck the groun' fust an' resaved the shock, an' I was only chucked, like a shot out of a shovel, upon the green grass, in place of bein' dashed to pieces. The Lord be praised for that same.'

'By Jove! it was a wonderful escape,' said Archie, 'but quite possible the way that you describe it. I beg your pardon for having doubted your word, Horrigan, which I confess I did.'

Horrigan's cheeks glowed with pleasure.

'Niver say it ag'in, Capt'in, shure it's not for the likes of you to be beggin' of *my* pardin; an' more by token, you'd ivery right in life to misbelieve me.'

'You're a fine fellow, Horrigan; but I should not think much of myself if, when I knew I was in the wrong, I did not say so, whether to peer or peasant. Well, and what did you do when you found yourself, unexpectedly, alive?'

'I was alive, Capt'in, shure enough, but I was mighty sore an' dazed like, for though I had no bones bruck, the blow on me head from that murdtherin' villian's pistol was a purty severe one, yer honour;—an' me fust fall, when I was onconscious, an' couldn't help meself, had bruised me badly. Well, I felt all over no how, an' I thought, 'if that baste, Brady, finds me here he'll murdther me,' an' I tried to get up, but I couldn't stan', an' I fell back, an' I misremember anny more till I woke an' found Noodle sittin' by me side, with me head in his lap, an' the minit I opened me eyes he puts a bottle to me mouth, an' I takes a good dthrain of the sperrits, an' I comes to, wonderful quick. Faith, there's nothin' like the whiskey for bringin' a man to life! I knowed Noodle well, an' I tould him what had happened to me, an' he said as how he had come to look for Brady, an' that he niver would go back to Ballyblunder till he had found him; an' so we agreed 'to hunt in couples,' as the sayin' is, an' we both of us tuck a solemn oath niver to give up the sarch night nor day till we cotched that bloody villian. Well, gintlemen, Noodle helped me to a shepherd's hut near by, where it was onlikely Brady would come, an' there I lay for days an' days onable to move from fever an' wakeness. How-an'-iver, Noodle was out ivery night, an' all night long, but nothin' could he see nor hear of him we wanted. At long last, I was able to lave the cabin an' to watch with Noodle; for some days we have had suspishins that Brady was on the mountain, but we niver made shure till to-night, an' that's the whole, gintlemen:—asy, Capt'in, we'd best get down here, it's far enough.'

The car stopped.

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# CHAPTER XIX.

## RETRIBUTION.

IT is a well-known fact that murderers will frequently haunt the spot where their crime was committed. What it is that impels them to return, it were difficult to say, but return they do. Weeks, months, years may have passed since the foul deed was done; it matters not, the murderer is there!

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Brady was standing on the very spot where six weeks before he had committed, as he supposed, two murders. Of one there was no doubt. Had he not seen the agonized look of his victim, as the fatal shot pierced his brain? Had he not seen the death-shiver pass over his limbs,—the hue of death settle on his face? Had he not seen?—*did* he not see them now?

'Look!' he cried, in a stifled voice of agony—'Look till him! holy Mother! he lies there still! why haven't they tuck him away? His eyes! see till his fearsome eyes!—take 'em aff me! oh! for the love of God! take 'em aff me!'

The wretched man sank upon his knees, he shook with fear and horror:—leaning forward on his hands, close to the edge of the rock, his eyeballs starting from his head, he glared into the depths below, where, to his excited and guilty mind, the body of Fanshawe seemed still to lie.

'What is it he sez?' he continued, 'that I shot him? I did!—I did!—I ouwn it—I ouwn it. You forced me to it!—you laid hoult av me—you—you—och! merciful Mother!—he's risin!—he's stretchin' out his arrums!—he's comin' to me!—he's crawlin' up!—he has a hoult av me!—he's dthraggin' me over!—murdther!—murdther!—marcy!—save me!—keep him aff!—I'm strangled—marcy! oh mar . . .'

His voice, which had risen to a piercing, agonizing scream, suddenly ceased, as did also his struggles to release himself from the imaginary embrace of his victim. He threw his arms up in the air, and, without an effort to save himself, fell over the edge of the rock on which he knelt; upon the very spot where, but a few weeks before, Fanshawe Fortescue had breathed his last.

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In the meantime the feet of the avengers were upon the track of the murderer.

Having left the car in the charge of Kit Kelly, the party, under the guidance of Horrigan, began to ascend the mountain. Not a word was spoken, not a sound was heard, but the quick tramp and heavy breathing of the men as they breasted the steep ascent.

Presently Horrigan halted.

'Stay,' he whispered, 'look to your arms, gintlemen; 'Coolan's Cave' is within a hundred yards—I'll jist creep for'ard an' see can I hear him.'

'Let the others stop, I shall go with you,' said Findon.

'It's best not, Misther Findon, two pair of feet makes more noise nor one, an' I'll be back in no time.'

'I shall go with you, Horrigan, and I defy the sharpest ear on earth to detect my footsteps—see.'

'May I niver! but you're barefut, Misther Findon!'

'Lead on, Horrigan, waste no more time. Archie, you will wait here with Noodle, will you not? remember *he* was my *brother!* I'll whistle if we want you.'

Archie pressed the hand held out to him.

'Go on, Fin, you've the best right; and if he escape you, I'll try what I can do; he *must* come this way, there's no other.'

'Escape *me!*' A bitter smile curled Findon's lip, as he followed Horrigan closely and silently towards the murderer's retreat.

It were useless to dwell upon the caution and cunning employed by Findon and Horrigan in their approach to 'Coolan's Cave,' for we know that he whom they sought was gone. Suffice it to say, that, crawling along on hands and knees as they neared the entrance, they finally crept into the cave itself, pistol in hand, and found themselves its sole occupants.

Findon was furious at Brady's escape, and, although he did not say it, Horrigan knew that in his heart he blamed him for having left the cave unguarded; whilst, on his part, he was equally disappointed, and moreover felt heartily ashamed of the failure of a plan, the success of which he had looked upon as certain, and had boasted of considerably. And now came the question, what was to be done next? To search the dark and gloomy recesses of the mountain, by the uncertain light of the moon, brightly though she shone upon those portions of the rock which came within her influence, would be worse than useless, and yet to abandon the search was not to be thought of.

Suddenly, in the midst of their eager whispering consultation, a sharp cry of mortal anguish broke the stillness of the night.

The three 'avengers' started, and looked around, and then for the first time they perceived that Noodle was not with them.

Again that dreadful, unearthly scream rang in their ears, curdling their very heart's blood: it ceased, and all was still again.

'By the etarnal!' cried Horrigan, 'its bloody Brady murdtherin' poor Noodle! Follow me, gintlemen, or we'll be too late; he's throwin' the craythur over the rocks; I know where the screech comes from.' So saying he started off, followed by his two companions.

Presently they overtook Noodle, who was pursuing the same path, though much more leisurely. Rejoiced to find that no harm had happened to the boy, but more mystified than ever with regard to the cry they had heard, they assailed him with questions.

A cunning leer,—half fun, half ferocity,—crossed Noodle's countenance.

'Noodle heerd bloody Brady's death-screech,' he said, 'an' Noodle's goin' to see him die.'

'Brady's death-screech!' repeated Archie, 'how do you know that?'

'Becase I sin him, Capt'in, tarin' the groun' wid his han's an' writhin' on his back, an' . . .'

'What's the boy talking of? you're dreaming, Noodle! what do you mean? oh heavens! for one glimmer of sense, just for an instant, to lead us right!' cried Findon.

'I sin him last night; I sin him a'most ivery night this long while, bud I niver heerd him screech till now. He's not fur off, Misther Findon, will yees come, an' see bloody Brady die?'

Findon stamped impatiently. 'I stumbled on the truth, Archie,' he said, 'it *is* in his dreams this poor fellow has seen him. Oh! what shall we do now, Horrigan, can you suggest nothing?'

'If I might be so bould, sirr, I'd advise followin'

Noodle:—(whisper,) it's my opinin that God has giv' him a shupernat'ral sinse, to make up for the loss of common sinse, yer honour; he sees an' he sez quare things at times, things that ne'ther you nor I (askin' yer honour's pardin) can see nor understand.'

Though neither Findon nor Archie shared Horrigan's belief in Noodle's supernatural powers, they agreed, after a short consultation, to put them to the test; first, because they could devise no better plan, and something must be done; and next, and that was their chief reason, because Noodle had evidently heard the awful cry, which had startled them so much, and was proceeding to the point whence it had seemed to come, when they had overtaken him. It was therefore probable that he would lead them to the same spot for which Horrigan had been making.

They were however mistaken. Horrigan had been misled by the echo amongst the rocks, and was conducting them higher up the mountain. 'Are you sure you're right, Noodle?' he whispered, as the boy turned off the path they were following.

'You're a wise man, Jim, an' Noodle's a fool; what makes yees follow a fool? 'Am I shure I'm right?' ha! ha! that bates Banagher anny how! an' me seein' him wid me two eyes, kickin' an' schramin' on the groun'—'Am I shure I'm right?' Well, well! is it on me head or me heels I'm walkin'? am I shure I knows that much—'Am I shure I'm right?' ha! ha! six weeks this blessed night bloody Brady hot me wid a pewther pot. I tould him thin, that, by six weeks were come an' gone, he'd lie as low as he laid me that night. I tould him whin, an' I cud ha' tould him whar! ha! ha!—'Am I shure I'm right?''

Thus muttering and chuckling, partly to himself, and partly to Horrigan, Noodle strode steadily on.

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Suddenly he stopped, and leaning forward, seemed to be looking for something, but the moon was obscured at that moment, and in vain he tried to penetrate the surrounding gloom.

'He sh'ud be this a-way,' he muttered, ''twas here I sin him.'

'What are you stopping for, Noodle? what is it you say?' whispered Findon impatiently, closing up to him.

Noodle made no answer, but kept muttering to himself, and still peering into the depths below, having halted, as Findon now perceived, on the very edge of a precipice.

'Heavens and earth! he'll drive me wild, Archie!' said Findon, as he and Horrigan joined him. 'Look at him staring over this rock and muttering no one knows what! and all this time that infernal murdering scoundrel is escaping! Noodle!' He laid his hand on the boy's shoulder and shook him roughly, almost fiercely. 'Noodle, what are you doing here, I say? we are losing time, do you hear me?'

'Asy, Misther Findon, sirr!' whispered Horrigan, 'asy, yer honour! Noodle has a rayson for what he's doin' may be; it's surprisin' how 'cute an' clever thim 'Innocents' are at times.'

Findon struck his forehead with his clenched fist.

'God forgive me! they'll drive me mad! to be forced to follow an idiot to the edge of a precipice; to hear him mouth out his insanity, and then to be told 'he has reason for what he does,' and at such a time as this, when every moment wasted is like taking a drop of life-blood from my heart!'

'Hush! gently, Findon! I thought I heard a groan,' whispered Archie.

They listened intently, but not a sound could they detect.

'A groan! where?' said Findon, breaking forth once more.

At that instant, the clouds passed from before the face of the moon, and he was answered.

All started back with horror and surprise depicted on their countenances; all except Noodle, whose smiling features expressed simply satisfaction at having found what he was in quest of.

'Ha!' said Findon, as he drew in his breath, and caught hold of Archie's arm, for the abrupt disclosure of the object upon which all eyes were rivetted, had almost caused him to lose his balance. 'Ha! it is he! I am indeed answered, my impatience rebuked, and—and . . .'

'Our revenge satisfied,' said Archie, 'for the man is evidently dying.'

There, on a ledge of rock, directly beneath them, and not six feet from the spot upon which they stood, lay the body of the murderer; his face distorted with pain, and his hands clutching at the grass and heather which grew around. His eyes were wide open, and as they met the glances of those above, a wild look of fear seemed to fill them.

The whole party silently made their way down to the place and crowded round the wretched man. Noodle was the first to break the solemn silence with which all regarded the writhing figure before them.

'It's six weeks this blessed night,' he said, peering steadily into the agonized face of the dying man, 'sin' I tould ye how't 'ud be, big Ben Brady:—do yees remimber?—Whin ye hot me wid the pewther pot, the blood follid the blow, and now there's blood upon your brow, an' the moon shinin' on it! faix, Noodle know'd how 't 'ud be—six weeks this blessed . . .'

Findon seized his arm and drew him back.

'The man is dying, Noodle, don't disturb his last moments!'—he spoke in a subdued tone.

It was kindly meant.—In the presence of death, angry and vindictive feelings could find no place in Findon Fortescue's heart. He felt, and acknowledged the hand of God in the punishment of his brother's murderer; and was it for him, a weak and erring mortal, to carry his vengeance further?—even to the brink of the grave?

It was kindly meant, but by this very act, prompted as it was by the spirit of charity and forgiveness, Findon, unwittingly, disturbed the departing spirit of the unhappy being at their feet, more, ay! a thousandfold more, than poor Noodle had the power to do. Indeed, it is doubtful whether Brady either heard the words, or saw the face of the 'Innocent;'—at all events he paid no attention to them, nor evinced any knowledge of their meaning; the whole time Noodle was addressing him, his eyes were rolling in his head, and his eager glances wandering from side to side, as if in search of something.

In drawing Noodle back, Findon brought himself and Horrigan more immediately in view of the dying man—the effect was electrical.

Brady started up to a sitting posture, roused as by a galvanic battery:—with head bent forward and eyes dilated, he glared at the two thus suddenly standing before him—horror and despair were depicted upon every lineament of his ghastly and agonized countenance.

Spell-bound by the appalling sight, neither Findon nor Horrigan had power to move away—they stood, their eyes fixed upon his, fascinated by the terrible spectacle upon which they gazed.

Brady threw out his arms, as if to drive them back: 'Keep aff! keep aff!' he shrieked, 'they're comin'! the two av them!—'two murdthers in one night!'—it's a lie! it's a lie! Jim Horrigan fell over the cliff! an' the other!—he gruppled me!—he struck me!—'twas in self-defince I fired! Oh God! they're comin' nigher!—nigher!—their could han's is on my throat!

—I'm chokin' !—marcy ! marcy ! murdther ! murdther ! rdther !'

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Ere the sound of the last fearful shriek had died away, Brady, the murderer, was no more.

# CHAPTER XX.

## THE RETURN.

'ARCHIE,' said Findon, as they proceeded towards Ballyblunder, after witnessing the tragedy described in the last chapter, 'never was the finger of God more apparent than in the punishment of that wretched man. Though many were on his track seeking to lay hold of him, by no hand of man did he perish. How it was he fell over that rock, will never be known—it is evident that the fall from that insignificant height has killed him; he must have gone head foremost upon the sharp point which we found covered with blood—that was undoubtedly his death-blow; and, Archie, do you remark the singular coincidence?'

'That he met his death on the same spot where poor dear Fanshawe died, you mean?'

'Yes,' replied Findon, his voice trembling with emotion; 'and more than that, the murderer of my beloved brother not only died on the same spot of ground, but he received his death-wound on the same, the identical spot of his body.'

'You're right,—in the middle of his forehead.'

'Ay! in the very centre, there did the fatal bullet enter my dear brother's head, and there did the sharp rock pierce the head of him who slew him; never was retribution more complete, more wonderful, far, far beyond the utmost power of man to effect!'

'I am glad he died thus,' said Archie; 'it is better, than that you or I should have killed him, which we might have done had we come in contact with him, and he had resisted.'

'Much better,' said Findon in an earnest and sad tone. 'Bad passions have been raging in my breast ever since my brother's death. I have been little better than a wild beast at heart.'

''*De mortuis nil nisi bonum,*' observed Archie;' 'but as it would be difficult to speak good of a man of whom one knows nothing but evil, the next best thing is to speak as little evil of him as possible, I suppose; but at all events he deserved his fate; no one can deny that—so your conscience need not trouble you on that score.'

'But, Archie, my conscience *does* trouble me. Oh! you know not what my feelings were towards that man! I seemed to want to take the law into my own hands; to punish him myself; but now that he is dead I feel how wrong I have been, and I thank God that I have been saved from crime.'

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The rest of the way was passed in silence. Death,—a sudden and awful death,—such as had been witnessed so recently, is well calculated to impress the mind with sad and solemn thoughts—well calculated too, as we have seen, to lay the stormy and unholy passions which Fanshawe's death had roused—well calculated to rebuke the blood-thirsty spirit of revenge which a great sorrow and a cruel deed had created.

Even Horrigan, though less alive to the Christian feeling of Charity than his better-educated companions, even he, as he looked askance on the rough pea-coat which concealed the face of the dead, felt subdued and humbled; and confessed that it was a relief to think that *his* hand had not dealt the blow.

Noodle alone knew no remorse, felt no awe, and thought no wrong. His poor, weak mind was incapable of retaining even the most vivid impressions for any length of time. When he talked of Ben Brady, he thought of his own broken head, and his anger was aroused, but change the scene or the subject, and all relating to it was forgotten. He was soon fast asleep, leaning over the well of the car, his head resting on the dead man's shoulder.

And so they proceeded, silent and subdued, the living and the dead, and, the link between them,—the sleeper.

On reaching the police-station, they told their tale, and left the body of Brady. This was a great relief to them; and as they drove towards Ballyblunder, they breathed more freely,—a weight seemed lifted from their hearts.

Day was breaking, and the dark shadows of night were swept from the face of the heavens, even as the light of love and mercy had swept the dark shadows from their souls; and Noodle, having been roused from his fearful pillow, was wide awake, and looking eagerly over the wild bog through which the road led; presently his eyes glanced with a ray of intelligence, he touched Archie's arm: 'Whist! hould hard, Capt'in!' he said in a low tone, 'there they are! four av 'em!'

Archie pulled up with a jerk. 'Who?—what do you mean?'

'Yonder, Capt'in, amongst them roshes! och! by the holy! they're aff! fire, Capt'in, fire!'

'Pooh!' said Archie, as a couple of mallards and their mates rose from a small stream which went winding through the bog. 'He has forgotten all the horrors of the night already, and thinks we are out after wild-fowl. Never mind the ducks to-night, Noodle, my man,' he added, as he drove on, 'we have no time to think of them just now.'

'Not the time to think av 'em!' repeated Noodle in astonishment; 'shure it's dhramin' you are, Capt'in, or may be it's makin' fun av poor Noodle you're afther! 'Not the time' to purshue the dooks! Noodle knows better nor that; the grey av the mornin's the very best time, shure yerself has tould me so aften an' aften, an' we come out o' purpose. Where's the guns? What's this at all? Och! may I niver, but it's a pishtol itself! Well, well! that bates all!—Capt'in Archie a-goin' to shut dooks wid a pishtol!'

And the boy chuckled, and grinned, and mumbled over this idea, which seemed to tickle his fancy wonderfully, till they arrived at Ballyblunder.

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When Archie and Findon made their appearance at the breakfast-table that morning, and related their midnight adventure, it was received, as may be supposed, with the utmost astonishment; for so secretly had they gone, that no one had been aware of their departure.

The wretched Brady's fate shocked the listeners, who were especially struck with the manner and place of his death. Mrs. Fortescue and her daughter wept in silence, as they thought of the beloved son and brother who had so lately perished on that very spot.

The subject was a painful one to all, and was soon allowed to drop.

# CHAPTER XXI.

## 'HE WHO HATH BESET HIM O'ER THE DEAD,' ETC.

'He who hath bent him o'er the dead
Ere the first day of death has fled,
The first dark day of nothingness,
The last of danger and distress,
(Before decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers,)
And marked the mild angelic air,
The rapture of repose that's there,
The fixed yet tender traits that streak
The languor of the placid cheek,
And—but for that sad shrouded eye,
That fires not, wins not, weeps not, now;
And but for that chill, changeless brow,
Where cold obstruction's apathy
Appals the gazing mourner's heart,
As if to him it could impart
The doom he dreads, yet dwells upon;—
Yes, but for these, and these alone,
Some moments, ay, one treacherous hour,
He still might doubt the tyrant's power;
So fair, so calm, so softly seal'd,
The first, last look by death revealed.'—*The Giaour.*

YOUTH will struggle hard against the stroke of death. Health and strength will not succumb at once to the blow, heavy though it be. Terrible had been the blow which had stricken Baby to earth; but still she lived, still she lingered, still days and weeks dragged on, and the pale, suffering face, resting on pillows, scarce whiter than itself, smiled a loving smile of gratitude and affection on the dear ones who watched over her.

It was a lovely morning in February, the sun shone full and bright on the closed shutters of the sisters' room; a gleam of sunshine streamed upon the carpet, and through the curtains of the bed; it rested on the pillow, and played over the calm face of the sleeper. A smile parted her lips—a heavenly smile of love, and peace, and rest: a faint colour overspread her cheek—was it colour? or did the sunlight impart a seeming glow of life to that deathlike countenance?

Kate's tender gaze was fixed upon her; she feared the light might awaken her from her gentle slumber, and leaning towards the foot of the bed, she softly drew the curtains closer, but even that slight movement roused her sleeping sister.

'Oh, Baby!' she said, 'I've awoke you, and you were in such a soft, calm sleep; how grieved I am.'

'But I am very glad, dearest Kate; I have slept enough; will you open the curtains, the shutters, and the window, too, I want air.'

She spoke with difficulty, and very feebly; the quick ear of love perceived the change. Kate shuddered; she could not speak, and her trembling hand could scarcely perform Baby's request.

Oh! was the dreaded moment at hand?

She returned to Baby's side. 'Raise me up, my darling sister,' faintly murmured the dying girl. 'How lovely, how fresh, how pure, how bright, the air and light of heaven!'

Kate's heart was full to bursting. Baby's face was changing, perceptibly changing; the shadow of death rested not upon it, but the light and glory of a brighter world shed their radiance upon every feature of the sweet and lovely countenance. It seemed as if death were to be baulked of his prey; as though corruption could not touch her, so holy, so angelic did she look. Could ought so lovely belong to earth?

Kate almost expected to see her lifted bodily up to heaven,—from life, from death, from suffering, and the grave, to the realms of bliss whither her spirit was already tending.

Presently Baby's lips moved again; she murmured something, but so low that Kate could not catch the sound. She bent over her; one word was slowly uttered, 'Mama.'

Kate hastily left the room, and quickly brought her mother.

Mrs. Kindly perceived at once that the hand of death was upon her child. She controlled her inward agony; she kissed the flushed cheek and burning brow, and pressed her darling to her heart with an intensity of anguish none but a mother can know; but neither sob nor tear escaped her, she would not sadden the last moments of her beloved child.

'Mama,' whispered Baby, 'I am going to leave you; do not grieve too much!'

'God is taking you to Himself, my darling, I must not grieve.'

Oh! the unselfish love of a mother! her lips quivered as she spoke, an ice-bolt was at her heart; but her face was calm, her voice unshaken.

'Kiss me, my own Kate! closer, closer.'

Kate's tears rained down upon the sweet face pressed to hers; she could not, oh! she could not keep them back!

'It is so hard to part!' she sobbed.

'Not—for—long—dear Kate; Papa—Archie—God bless them!'

She spoke with difficulty and at intervals.

The end was very near.

She closed her eyes and seemed to sleep; once, and once only, she breathed a name distinctly: 'Fanshawe!' and a sweet, placid smile of love, and faith, and hope, played on her parted lips.

And thus, supported in her mother's and her sister's arms, she breathed her soul away, in a sleep as calm and quiet as the sleep of a little child.

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Who has not known, by sad experience, that vacuum, that desolation of the heart, caused by the death of a dearly-loved friend or relative?

A house of mourning needs no description. The swollen eyes, the hushed voices, the silent footsteps, the sad smile,—ah! who has not known them?

The family at Ballyblunder had been sorely stricken; the light of their eyes had been taken from them; the darling of their hearts was gone; the voice they loved so dearly would never again be heard on earth; never, never again would Baby's sweet and loving smile gladden their hearts!

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE FAVORITE HAUNT.

THE month of June had once more come round. Mrs. and Miss Fortescue had left Ballyblunder for Edinburgh. Helen Fortescue was an affectionate, warm-hearted girl, whom it was impossible to know long and intimately without loving, and Kate had parted from her with real regret; but no one on earth could fill the void which Baby's death had left. They had loved each other with far more than the ordinary love of sisters, and her loss was to Kate as the lopping off of a limb, as the pouring out of the life-blood from the heart. But as time flowed on in his even, steady course, heedless of the sorrow and the joy, the pain and the pleasure, the rapture and the agony of all creation; as day succeeded night, and night succeeded day, and the hours brought their ordinary occupation, Kate's mind became gradually more composed, her grief less violent, her trust in God more perfect. *He* had taken Baby to Himself, and she could at length calmly say, '*The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.*'

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Summer days brought back summer pursuits, and again were Kit Kelly and the boat in requisition, and again did Loch Croogh witness many a fishing party upon its placid and glassy bosom; but, as yet, no one from Ballyblunder had summoned courage to visit Ballacroogh. Towards one or other of the many islands on the loch was the boat's head invariably turned, without a question or a comment; by tacit consent Ballacroogh was never mentioned, save by Kit Kelly, who tried in vain to tempt Archie there, declaring that 'the early fush war always conjugated aff the p'int av Ballacroogh mor' nor annywheres, an' the Capt'in knowed that same;' but Archie was not to be persuaded, for was it not off the point of Ballacroogh, that Fanshawe had dropt his fly-book into the water? and was it not on the rock close by, that Baby had sat and sketched?

But this avoidance of a spot beloved by all, and now become doubly dear by the associations of the past, could not last for ever. Kate, in her secret heart yearned to look again upon the scenes hallowed by the names of Baby and of Fanshawe: and Archie, with the same longing, had come to the resolution of stealing away the first convenient opportunity to visit Ballacroogh. One afternoon, as he was about to take a row upon the loch, Kate came to him looking pale and nervous, and laying her hand upon his arm, said in a low voice, 'Archie, let us go to Ballacroogh.'

'Yes, Kate,' was his only reply, as he kissed her and placed her in the boat.

And thus the brother and sister together sought their favorite island, and together, once more wandered among its well-known and long-loved scenes;—it had been their favorite resort from earliest childhood. Often had 'papa' rowed 'mama' and 'the children' across the still loch to spend the long summer evening upon their dear island; there stood the remains of the arbour built years ago, and the grotto which their young hands had begun but never finished; there also was the smooth, slippery rock, off which Archie, when quite a child, had fallen into the deep pool below, and would have been drowned had not Baby run screaming to papa, who, rushing to the spot, saw Archie's straw hat floating upon the water, and, hastily jumping in and diving to the bottom, most providentially came at once upon the body of his boy, dragged him to the surface, and saved his life.

All this passed rapidly through the minds of the brother and sister, as they mechanically halted by the scene of the above briefly-described disaster. Kate leaned heavily on Archie's arm, she pressed it to her side—he understood her.

'Ay! Kate, I remember the spot well; it was nearly all over with me, and would have been quite if it had not been for *her*.'

'And papa, dearest Archie.'

'Yes, my father saved my life; and, thank God, he is with us yet, Kate, and I can show my love and gratitude to him for that, and for a hundred other kindnesses; but she, whose piercing shrieks brought him to my aid, is gone, and—and I sometimes feel that I never loved her enough, or thought enough of what I owed her.' Tears stood in his eyes as he spoke.

'Dearest Archie, you must not think that. She well knew how you loved her. She is gone, but to One who loves her more than any earthly friend can do.'

Archie sighed heavily, but made no reply.

They strolled on till they came to the spot where Baby had taken her last sketch—there they simultaneously stopped, and sat down. The view was peculiarly picturesque, the true composition for a picture was before them.

To the left, the ground rose abruptly, and was covered with thick brushwood; to the right, 'the banqueting oak' spread his giant branches over his inferior brethren, which disputed the intervening space with heather-covered rocks, and wild ferns of various kinds; immediately in front, a vista opened to view broken ground, with patches of green sward, interspersed with more rock, more heather, and more fern. This picturesque glade terminated in the rocky point, so frequently mentioned, where Fanshawe had in vain cast for a salmon. Beyond the point, the peaceful, placid waters of the loch lay glittering in sunshine, save where the dark shadows of the trees, on the opposite bank, in clear, distinct reflection, sunk deep—deep down in its cold glassy bosom: the bank itself, rising almost precipitously to a considerable height, was thickly clothed with hazel and dwarf oak; black, rugged rocks frowned from amidst the richest-coloured mosses and lichens; and a small, silvery line, now bounding, leaping, foaming over the opposing rocks,—now vanishing from sight beneath the thick foliage, threaded its devious course, in spite of every obstacle, till, with one final bound, it precipitated itself into the loch, and was lost amidst its dark waters. In the far distance, lofty mountains, wrapped in the purple light of the declining sun, completed the picture.

'How lovely!' said Kate, who had taken in the view at a glance; 'It looks more beautiful to me this evening than ever; no wonder darling Baby loved this spot and this scene so well.'

'Baby had the true genius of painting, and she looked upon it with the eye of an artist, no less than with that of affection,' said Archie; 'but I cannot bear to think—to talk of—of this—of her—now'—he started to his feet, and continued, rapidly, 'You know, Kate, that we are going to leave Ballyblunder, do you not?'

'Yes,' her voice trembled, 'yes, I supposed so from what I have heard papa and mama say when they have been talking together; but no one has actually told me so. It is then true, is it?'

'Yes, it is true; I thought you had known it; I suppose they were afraid to tell you; but you cannot be surprised after all that has happened that my father and mother should wish to leave Ballyblunder, especially my father.'

'Why especially papa, Archie?'

'Because of his disappointment in the hope (a hope of twenty years standing) of bettering the condition, both morally and physically, of these ungrateful vagabonds.'

'Ah! I had forgotten; I was thinking only of the dreadful—the . . .'

'Consequences of the people's ingratitude and brutality?' said Archie. 'Exactly; these consequences, combined with his conviction of the impossibility of striving, with any chance of success, against the evil influences around him, have decided my father to sell Ballyblunder, and to leave the county.'

'Poor papa! after so many years of patience and perseverance too.'

'You have no idea *how* disappointed he is, Kate; he is not demonstrative you know, especially where his own feelings are concerned; but the regeneration of these, his starving and benighted countrymen and fellow-creatures, has been the day-dream of his life; to this one object he has sacrificed social pleasures, ay! and even fortune and health; he has persevered in his endeavours to do good with an untiring energy and singleness of purpose which even his enemies allow to be worthy of all admiration, but all to no purpose. The ministers of religion,—of the Roman Catholic religion,—say, 'No, we will not have education, comfort, cleanliness introduced amongst our flock; they shall neither be civilized nor taught, because, if they are, our power over them will be diminished.' But enough of this,' he added bitterly; 'for I can never speak of the priests with patience, and this spot and these scenes should be sacred to feelings of peace and love, to memories of past pleasures, and should not be defaced by subjects which irritate and annoy.'

Kate's tears were falling fast; she put her hand into Archie's, his fingers closed upon hers with a warm pressure, and they sat silent and thoughtful. The sun sank lower and lower, the shadows of the tall trees and lofty rocks grew longer and longer; still they sat silent and thoughtful, still the tears glistened in Kate's eyes, and sorrow and sadness were on Archie's brow. In a golden blaze, the god of the fire-worshippers sank to rest; radiant flashes of light, fragments of his glory, floated serenely in the glowing heavens; higher and higher yet, rose-coloured clouds slumbered in a sea of tender green, whilst far, far away, the evening gloom crept slowly up on purple pinions; and still the brother and sister sat side by side with clasped hands and tearful eyes.

Strange thoughts suddenly arose in Kate's mind as she gazed upon the glowing sunset. She thought of the time when this heaven and this earth shall have passed away; she thought of the glory of God's 'eternal kingdom in the heavens'—a glory that 'eye hath not seen nor ear heard.' Was *she* there at that moment? Baby,—her dear, dear sister!—was she singing 'Glory to God on high,' with the angels in heaven, whilst her earthly body still lay in the tomb? or where was she?

A distressing thought, a perplexing question,—distressing, for it implies doubt; perplexing, for who can solve it?

'Kate, what are you thinking of?' asked Archie suddenly, as he observed her stedfast gaze, her parted lips, and her flushed cheek.

She told him.

'Ah, Kate! often and often have I thought of that too: where the spirit goes when we die. But, dearest Kate, it is not given to us to know; for some reason, doubtless wise, and good, and merciful, the secret of the soul's flight has not been revealed; but this we know, that if we die in repentance and faith, we shall, in God's good time, join the heavenly host; further than that we need not trouble ourselves. Remember that Time will cease after death, and Eternity commence,—a thousand years will be but as a day.'

'You are right, Archie—I feel that you are right; but my foolish, weak, perverse human nature *will* return to the question.'

'It is a question that never will be solved in this world, Kate: the wish to know is natural; but we may be sure there is good reason for our curiosity not being gratified; perhaps it may be to induce us to lean more completely and entirely on Faith.'

'Yes, it must be so,' said Kate, in a musing tone. 'Faith oh, how I cling to it! Without Faith, how dreary, how dreadful would the future appear! There are so many things we cannot understand, and could not believe without strong, earnest, stedfast Faith!'

'It is so indeed, Kate darling; and *she* clung to it with a strength which could only have come from above.'

'Baby was almost an angel before she left us,' whispered Kate.

'And is quite an angel now, we may—we can—we *do* feel sure of this; and oh! what joy to know that she is for ever happy!'

Kate threw her arms round Archie's neck; her lips trembled, her voice faltered, but her words were words of strength, of trust, of faith.

'Let us so live that we may, through God's mercy, join our darling in heaven,' she murmured.

Archie folded her in his arms and kissed her tenderly. 'Through God's mercy we will,' he repeated.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE HOLY FATHERS.

IT was soon publicly known that the Kindlys were going to leave the county of ——. Ballyblunder, with all the property appertaining thereto, was advertized for sale.

No astonishment was felt at Mr. Kindly's determination. It was not likely that he would remain in a place where the recompense for much money and many years of unceasing labour, spent in the service of those around him, was murder and bloodshed, decay and death,—the murder of his child's betrothed; the decay and death of that fondly-loved child, the young, the beautiful!

What chance had he in the fight? The experience of twenty years and upwards said, 'None.'

An influence which owned no limit and no law had been arrayed against him from the first. Stoutly had he withstood, bravely had he battled against Prejudice and Ignorance, stalwart giants of misrule—

potent pillars of the barbarous and savage State to which they belonged, and which they upheld;—stoutly, I say, had Mr. Kindly done battle with these twin monsters, hideous, deformed monsters, nourished by superstition, and hounded on by fanaticism. See how they cling to the shoulders of that trembling, toiling Sinbad—Civilization; just struggling into life. See how, with long, sinewy fingers, they clutch her gasping throat, strangling each noble impulse, each lofty aspiration in its birth! lying like a nightmare on her breast; smothering, in their foul embrace, the timid sigh, the half-formed wish for 'light and air! —light and air!'

In vain, in vain, O Civilization, that piteous cry! the deadly incubus lies heavy on thy breast; the light which, for one moment, flickered before thine eyes, is quenched; the death-rattle is in thy throat; thou bowest thy head, and sinkest down—down—down into the valley and shadow of death!

* * * *
* * * *

My reader, I trust, has not forgotten the small white-washed cottage, flanked on either side by a goodly stack of prime peat, and a moderate rick of indifferent hay. Once more we will enter the little parlour, redolent of punch and peat, again to behold the cozy carouse of the reverend Fathers—again to imbibe wisdom from their sacred lips—to receive lessons in humility, patience, and long-suffering—to see the goodly effects of sound doctrine, of high principle of true religion—to mark and to admire how Christian precepts are put into Christian practice.

'Well, Donovan, and what more have you to tell us; I see by the twinkle of your eye that you have kept the best bit of news to the last—what is it?—out with it, man.'

'Ah, Father Maguire, shure it's yerself that has the coaxin' ways wid you; what have I got to tell? why, jist this, thin—you'll not, an' we'll not, be long throubled with them intherlopin' Kindlys, bad cess to 'em!'

'Eh! what!' cried impetuous Father Hogan; 'How do you know that, Donovan?'

'How do I know it—is it? Faith, asy enough, your riverence—them as runs may read.'

'What may they read, my man?' said Father Maguire, in a soft voice.

'They may read, your riverence, that Ballyblunder and all the town-lands an' tenements, includin' the bogs an' mountains appertainin' thereto, are advertized for sale:—blur an' ages! where's the paper at all?' Donovan had been fumbling, now in one pocket, now in another, the whole time he was speaking.

'Ballyblunder advertized for sale?' cried one priest.

'And the whole of the property with it?' shouted the other. 'Are you sure?—are you *quite* sure, Donovan?'

'Where did you see it?'

'What paper was it in?'

'Was it 'to be sold,' or 'to be let?''

'You must have misread it.'

'It's too good to be true.'

Donovan, meanwhile, undisturbed by this avalanche of interrogation, continued searching his numerous pockets; he stood up and shook himself—nothing came of it. He was beginning to think that some evil-minded individual (probably one of the Kindly faction) had stolen the paper for the purpose of making him appear a liar in the eyes of their reverences: he looked at his hat, which lay on the floor, with a strong inclination to seize it and make good his retreat, when a sudden gleam of intelligence shot from his cunning eye.

'Well, well, James Donovan! shure your memory isn't worth a minute's purchase, so it isn't! See here, your riverences!' He lifted up the lining of his hat, and drew out a piece of newspaper.

'Me pockets have holes in 'em; but me hat has none, barrin' the one I stop wid me head, an' so, for safety, I jist put that bit av paper in here, your riverence.' This he said with a knowing leer, as he handed the paper to Father Maguire, who took it eagerly. Father Hogan left his punch,—his reeking punch, and leaning over the back of Father Maguire's chair, together they devoured, with glistening, eager eyes, the following advertisement:—

'Messrs. Puff and Dart beg to announce to the nobility and gentry of the County, that they have been honoured with instructions to offer for *Peremptory Sale* that noble mansion, called *Ballyblunder*, with the whole of the valuable and extensive property thereto appertaining. The extent of this flourishing and improving estate is 32,000 acres, 14 roods, 6 perches, comprising in its extended area thriving villages, besides many valuable tenements, scattered in picturesque confusion over the hills and dales of this truly romantic and beautiful property. Three splendid lochs and two rivers serve at once to embellish and to increase the value of the *Ballyblunder Estate.* Several lofty mountains (amongst which the justly-celebrated Slaughmacuish stands pre-eminently conspicuous) rear their towering heads upon the fertile plain. That great mineral wealth lies buried in the bosom of Slaughmacuish, is beyond doubt. Copper ore in considerable quantities has been found not far from the surface: according to competent judges, it needs but capital and labour to insure a princely revenue from the copper mines of Slaughmacuish! Vast flocks of sheep and cattle are pastured upon the mountains; and a great extent of bog, the chief part of which is capable of cultivation, stretches from their base, side by side with smiling meadows, rich corn-fields, and hanging woods. Further particulars to be had of Messrs. Puff and Dart, 15, Cheap Street, Rushport.'

'Hooray! hooray! howray!' cried Father Hogan, unable to contain his delight; may I niver see glory, but this is better than—than . . .'

'Easter offerings,' suggested his spiritual friend.

'Ay! or any offerings—baptismal, nuptial, or funeral—it bates them all to smithereens! so it does!

Your hand, Donovan; here, take a glass of punch—sit down—sit down, I say—a glass! faith, you desarve a hogshead itself for your news this day.'

So saying, he pushed Donovan into a chair: he feigned reluctance, modestly muttering, 'Faix! it's not for the likes of me to sit forenint—ah! shure you'll ruin me showlder, Father Hogan! but you've the pleasant ways wid yees, your riverence! well, well,—asy now!'

'Now, Donovan, fill, man alive! and you, Father Maguire, charge your glass, if you plaze, an' I'll give you a toast.'

They obeyed.

Starting to his feet, glass in hand: 'Up on your ten toes, then!' cried the excited priest—'Here's success to the butchers of Ballyblunder, an' may they niver want mutton!'

Each man tossed off his glass of whiskey at a breath, and, sitting down, turned his tumbler bottom upwards on the table.

'Ha! ha! ha! Faith I can't help it, Father Maguire; there's no use in looking savage at me—I must laugh or burst—to think of the sneering, snarling, snivelling Kindlys turned out at last!—root an' branch bundled out of the parish, out of the county, out of the kingdom, I trust in God, (here he reverently crossed himself); why it's enough to make a saint smile, let alone a sinner—ha! ha! ha!'

'Gently, Father Hogan, or our friend Donovan will think we drink our punch too strong: let us rejoice by all means at this good news, it is fit and right to do so. The departure of these, no doubt well-meaning, but misguided people, will certainly prove a great benefit to the half-famished, hardly-used peasantry of this district. Still, let us rejoice, moderately and quietly; there is no occasion for noise and uproar—it is unseemly.'

'I stand rebuked—that is, I sit rebuked. Faith! I'll never make a good priest! I spake my mind too plainly, an' I laugh too loud; but you're as glad as I am, at heart, Father Maguire, can you deny that same?'

The holy and astute man smiled a benignant smile.

A Scotchman, when either very angry or very pleased, expresses his feelings in broad Scotch; it matters not how well trained or well tutored he may be in the softer idioms, and more mellifluous tones of the Saxon, conventionalities are thrown to the winds, and out he comes with his own native dialect. As with the Scotch, so with the Irish, at all events, so was it with Father Hogan, whose manners and speech, never at any time remarkable for refinement, were, when under excitement, strongly tinged with the local colouring of the cabin and the bog, whence he had originally sprung.

Phil Hogan, the father, had been blessed with two sons; he himself was 'a dacent poor fellow,' and had contrived, by working hard at his farm, by saving much and spending little, to put by in 'the fut of his stocking,' as much as would make 'a scholard' of one of 'the boys;' accordingly, whilst Pat followed the plough, John matriculated (save the mark!) at Maynooth. He became a priest, and added, to his already numerous accomplishments, yet this one, the art of drinking any given quantity of whiskey-punch, without being 'the worse for liquor.'

If, to this slight sketch we add, that Father Hogan considered it his bounden duty to curse all Protestants (more especially those of his own parish), we shall have said all that is necessary.

'But when is it to be, Donovan?' asked Father Maguire, 'when is the sale to take place?'

''Deed thin, yer riverence, I dunna whin izactly: I called at the office, an' seen Misther Puff, but he dunna hisself whin it would be; 'it won't be long fust, Donovan,' he said—thom's his very words, your riverence.'

'Well, the sooner the better, I wish it was to-night they went,' said Father Hogan. 'I'm gladder to get that scamp, Archie Kindly, out of the counthry, than the whole kit of them; I hate that blusthering spalpeen!'

'Faith, they say yer riverence has raison to dislike the Capt'in,—he was rude to ye wunst, I've been tould—he's a rough chap when he's riz, is Capt'in Archie.'

'Rude to me! by me sowl he's rude to ivery one; he has no more manners than a pig!'

'I'm tould the Capt'in shuck a horsewhip over yer sacred showlthers, Father Hogan; and more nor that, threatened to pitch yer riverence into the loch; bud shure it's too bad to be thrue.' Donovan looked slily at the priest out of the corners of his eyes.

Father Hogan reddened to the very roots of his hair. 'Who tould you that lie, Donovan,' he asked angrily.

'Faix! I know'd it was a lie—I know'd that big as he is, an' sthrong as he is, an' able may be to do it, he'd niver dar' to insult the holy Father that a-way.'

'He's not able; no man alive is able either to horsewhip, or to throw me into the loch,' said Father Hogan, still more angrily; 'but I ask you, James Donovan, who tould you that lie?'

'I misremimber, yer riverence, who tould me, and . .'

'I insist upon knowing; I'll not be thrifled with; now then, Donovan, spake out, who tould you?'

'Asy, yer riverence! shure I'd tell yees if I know'd, why wouldn't I? There's a many I've heerd talk of it, bud I can't call to mind annybody to-day in pertickiler who tould me, and that's the thruth.'

'I don't care how many you've heard spake of it, it's a black lie!' He was literally foaming with rage, shaking with passion. 'I only wish,' he added savagely, 'that the great awkward gomeril had done what you say; I wish he would give me a fair excuse to break this twig' (snatching up a shillelah, and shaking it wrathfully) 'over his huge carcase? I'd bate him a long while before he'd laugh, I'm thinking; the great hulkin' bosthoon of a . . .'

The door suddenly opened, and Archie Kindly stood on the threshold.

The effect was electrical;—had Archie appeared in the spirit instead of in the flesh—had he been indeed a veritable apparition, he could scarcely have produced a greater sensation. Never in the annals of 'Holy Church' had a more astounding miracle been performed: it equalled, nay, surpassed the liquefying of the blood of Saint Januarius; for whereas, in that well-preserved and time-honoured instance of miraculous power, the faithful were kept some minutes in suspense, whilst the sacred, but somewhat perverse substance condescended to liquefaction—in the present instance, it was done in a moment. True, the miracle of the Saint was reversed, for Father Hogan's blood was, in all conscience, liquid enough, and racing through his veins at a tremendous pace, under the combined influence of punch and passion; when suddenly, 'heigh! presto, pass!' No conjuror, not even the far-famed Wizard of the North, ever sent a dozen half-crowns from his own hand into a glass lantern, quicker than did the apparition of Archie Kindly send the blood from Father Hogan's face into his shoes. The face of flame became the face of death;—the quiver of rage the shiver of fear. The loud voice, was hushed—the stalwart arm no longer brandished the formidable 'shillelah,' but hung powerless at his side—the vitality of the man was suspended—his liquids had become solids!—and this instantaneously, before (to use a homely figure) before one could say 'Jack Robinson.'

Not Tam O'Shanter, when in the excess of his delight he roared out 'well done cutty-sark!' was more astounded, and I may add, more terrified at the consequences, than was Father Hogan at the sudden appearance of the man he was burning 'to bate.' Nay, I believe the holy man would far rather have faced a whole regiment of warlocks and witches (whether with or without 'cutty-sarks') than Archie Kindly.

Archie looked at the figure before him in amazement; he could not understand the sudden metamorphosis:—why did the flushed cheek pale?—why did the fierce eyes fall? But if he did not comprehend, neither did he care to be enlightened, for Father Hogan was by no means a person to interest Archie Kindly; he disliked his coarse manners, and systematically avoided him: therefore, quickly removing his glance, which had, all unknown to himself, (like the eye of the basilisk), turned its victim into stone, and addressing Father Maguire, he said, as he laid a book upon the table,—

'I found this book as I crossed the bog from O'Neil's tower, it belongs to you, I see, Mr. Maguire. As I opened it to find out its owner, a paper dropt from it, and as I stooped to pick it up, my own name caught my eye; I therefore took the liberty of reading the contents, which are both strange and interesting.'

He paused a moment, and fixed his eyes steadily and significantly on Father Maguire, who flushed visibly and bit his lip in the vain effort to hide his confusion and annoyance, for well he knew the contents of that paper.

'In the first place,' continued Archie, in a voice perfectly calm and courteous, but unmistakably tinged with contempt, 'In the first place, I read my father's name, Captain Fortescue's, and my own, written in red ink. The following remark, in *your handwriting*, Mr. Maguire, with which I am perfectly acquainted, underlines those names '*to be taken care of.*' Now, although I well knew and appreciated—according to its worth—your untiring zeal and unflagging industry in the temporal as well as spiritual welfare of your own flock, I confess I was not aware that we heretics and aliens were the especial objects of your consideration and care; but having accidentally discovered your benevolent intentions towards us, I could not pass your door without giving myself the pleasure of calling to thank you personally in my father's, my friend's, and my own name, for your exceedingly kind and charitable protection.'

Father Maguire saw by the curl of the lip, and the occasional flash of the eye, that he was read through and through,—that his 'benevolent intentions' were perfectly understood. Neither was the fine vein of irony thrown away upon him; he was far too clever a man himself not to detect the subtle sarcasm of another. Whereas Father Hogan, on the contrary, rubbed his hands and chuckled internally as Archie concluded his grateful acknowledgments; he breathed freely once more, and thought to himself, 'Well, well! was ever such a soft-headed fool as that? Sure there's no merit in deceiving such a gomeril.'

A Jesuit priest is seldom taken by surprise—he seldom loses his presence of mind. In the present instance, although Father Maguire was at first thunderstruck, and for a moment betrayed slight symptoms of confusion, he rallied immediately, and by the time Archie had finished his speech, he was calm, cool, and collected. The knowledge that there was not a remark written in that paper which would not bear two constructions, served materially to re-assure him; and he bowed graciously, and smiled benignly, as he replied in polite and honied accents,—

'That paper was not intended for your perusal, Mr. Archie Kindly; but I am glad you have, accidentally, seen it;—I am glad, because it must convince you that your father and yourself have not done me justice. You have imagined that I am unfriendly towards you because I cannot, consistently with my duty, acquiesce in all the plans and schemes proposed by Mr. Kindly. No man likes his kind intentions to be misconstrued—I am no exception to this rule; and, as I have always had your real interest at heart, and always wished your father well, I certainly have felt hurt at the unjust suspicions with which, I am perfectly aware, I am regarded.'

Archie looked at Father Maguire with astonishment, not unmixed with admiration. So fine a specimen of cool audacity he had never before witnessed. 'What a diplomatist he would make!' he thought. 'I have another shot for him, however; if he stand that equally well, he will deserve the red hat.'

'I should be extremely sorry, Mr. Maguire, and so I am sure would my father, to do you an injustice, and I beg to apologize for the wrong, you say, we have done you; but . . .'

'Do not mention it, my dear sir, you have said enough; an offence acknowledged is at once pardoned —nay, forgotten. I shall never think of it more.'

Father Maguire waved his hand with the air of a sovereign pardoning a subject. Archie smiled wickedly; he had a rod in pickle for him, and out it came.

'Thank you for your generous forgiveness,' he said. 'I assure you I value it as it deserves; but there are other names besides those I have mentioned in this paper.' (He drew the paper from his pocket as he spoke.) 'I read here—Ben Brady, Tim Higgins, Moony, Gallagher, Richard Mangles, Pat O'Connor, John and James Malony, Robert Doyle, and James Macnamara. The first name on the list is that of a murderer as well as a sheep-killer; he is gone to his account, and I will therefore say no more of him;' (Archie's voice became stern and his brow dark as he referred to that man:) 'the three next—Higgins, Moony, and Gallagher—I have long suspected, I may indeed say, known, to have been engaged in the late outrages of James Macnamara I have also had my suspicions; the other five, I know nothing about; but your information, Mr. Maguire, is doubtless better than mine, and as they are classed with notorious offenders, you have, of course, good reasons for so classing them.'

'That list is not in my handwriting, Mr. Archie; but . . .'

'No, I see it is not, it is in Donovan's writing.' He fixed his eyes on Donovan, who was sidling towards the door, pale as ashes.

'Yes,' said Father Maguire, 'that list was prepared by Donovan by my directions: all those men, I am sorry to say, are under suspicion of having been engaged in the late scandalous outrages; but we have not direct proof, as yet, against any of them. I have therefore thought it best to say nothing on the subject until I could get more certain information.'

Donovan's courage rose as he heard Father Maguire take the responsibility of the list upon himself. 'Faix! his riverence is a grand man intirely!' he muttered.

Archie's admiration of the 'grand man' was also on the increase, but his hardest hit was yet to come.

'And yet,' he continued, 'notwithstanding your suspicions of these men, I see here, in your handwriting, Mr. Maguire—immediately following this list of worthies—'*to be cared for, and rewarded according to their work.*' He looked stedfastly and fixedly at Father Maguire,—not a muscle moved in the holy man's countenance—not a symptom of dismay—not a trace of apprehension ruffled the calm serenity of his peaceful gaze, as his eyes encountered those of Archie Kindly fixed upon him in stern and resolute enquiry, —his cheek blanched not—his eye quailed not,— nevertheless the good Father's mind was sorely troubled: he was angry with himself for having dropt the pocket-book, and angry with Archie for having found it; he was irritated and ashamed beyond measure at the negligence which thus exposed him before Hogan and Donovan; but worse than all, far worse than all, was, to him, the fear of consequences. The paper would be made use of to his detriment—he would be held up to ridicule as a detected schemer—his influence would be weakened with the people: nay at Rome itself, where the story would soon be known—he should lose caste—his high character as an astute and successful disciple of Ignatius Loyola would suffer; and yet,—though anger, shame, irritation, and fear racked the brain and tortured the mind of Father Maguire,—his immoveable features exhibited no sign of the storm within.

Smiling blandly, and speaking slowly and softly, he thus replied to the home-thrust which Archie had fondly hoped would have touched a vital spot, but which apparently glanced off the mail-clad veteran as spray glances from a rock:—

'I am not surprised that those words are not understood by you, Mr. Archie: they are ambiguous—intentionally so. Had I written, 'to be hunted out and handed over to the rigour of the law,' what sort of predicament should I have been in had that pocket-book fallen into the hands of one of the proscribed, instead of into yours, which might have been the case?'

'Predicament! how so, Mr. Maguire?' asked Archie, with an incredulous smile.

'Ah! I see that you entertain the popular error in regard to our authority and influence over the people, and imagine that we can do anything we please with them;—quite a mistake I assure you. Influence and authority we undoubtedly have, to a certain extent, but *only* to a certain extent, not including life and limb. The people know, of course, that I highly disapprove of their late illegal and outrageous conduct; I have spoken frequently and plainly on the subject to many, and have pointed out, as in duty bound, the wickedness of their acts, and the certain punishment which will sooner or later overtake them. All this they know, but they *do not know* the active part I have taken, and am still taking, to put down this most atrocious system of sheep-killing; they do not know that I am in constant communication with the police, that I am incessantly employed in efforts to discover, and bring to justice, the perpetrators of these outrages; did they know all this, Mr. Archie Kindly, my life would not be worth half-an-hour's purchase.'

Strange to say, notwithstanding this astounding announcement, so fraught with danger to the holy man, the incredulous smile still played on Archie's handsome lip; he seemed neither to appreciate the magnitude of the danger, nor the sublimity of the courage which defied it.

'If I understand you rightly then, Mr. Maguire,' he said, 'this note, 'to be cared for, and rewarded according to their work,' means, 'to be captured and handed over to the police?'

'Exactly so; you missed the right interpretation, the phrase being, as I have before stated, intentionally ambiguous.' '

'I am not well versed in priestly diplomacy; I must, therefore, trust to your forbearance, sir, towards my ignorance, when I candidly confess, that the two phrases, 'to be cared for,' and 'to be taken care of,' seem to my untutored ears very like synonymous terms.'

A slight, a very slight shade of colour, tinged the Jesuit's cheek.

Archie's quick eye detected it, and he looked triumphant.

Father Maguire laughed pleasantly.

'Very good, very good,' he said in a cordial tone; 'that is a fair hit; you are a clever and a subtle arguer, sir, you have great abilities, Mr. Archie, you should cultivate them; it would be a thousand pities to let them lie dormant; but, as I was about to say, I am not going either 'to capture your father,' or 'to hand him over to the police;' and again the priest laughed pleasantly.

'Mr. Maguire,' said Archie, half amused, 'my abilities are to yours as a farthing rushlight to a jet of gas. Your tact, your presence of mind, your surprising quickness, and your consummate command of countenance, are beyond all praise. I only wish that these most excellent gifts were employed in—if I may not say a better—at least a different cause. A short time back I thought you worthy to become a cardinal, but I now think the red hat by no means an adequate reward for your high talents; no, the papal throne should be your seat, sir; your present sphere is far too limited, your present position far too humble, for a person of your mental caliber.'

The tone of Archie's voice had become more and more severe as he proceeded, the sarcasm more and more apparent; for, though amused and astonished at Father Maguire's extraordinary nerve and ingenuity, he could not forget, that the failure of his father's long cherished hopes, nay, even the misfortunes which had lately befallen him, and the consequent removal of the family from the county, were mainly attributable to the machinations and unceasing hostility of the wily priest. As he turned to leave the room, he said to Father Maguire, 'Adieu, sir; you will have no objection, of course, to my keeping this, as it so closely concerns my family.'

He waited not for the good Father's consent, but returning the paper to his pocket, and without noticing either Father Hogan or Donovan, he took his departure.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### FATHER AND SON.

'WELL,' said Archie, as he walked rapidly towards home, 'that man understands his trade; I never met so cool a hand. Some wise man said, 'Whatever is worth doing, is worth doing well,' and certainly Father Maguire acts up to that principle—he thinks it worth while to lie, and, hang me, if he does not do it to perfection! That's a precious document I picked up to-day! The scoundrel Donovan, too! My father will believe in his villany now, I hope! I have felt sure of it for some time, but I never could get any direct proof before. Ah! my dear good father is far too unsuspicious, far too kind, far too easy with these fellows—always has been.' He walked on, while a sad expression crossed his countenance. 'The fact is, my father judges of others by himself; and because *he* could not return evil for good, he thinks no one else can; he loads these fellows with favours, heaps benefits upon them, and takes for granted that they will be grateful. A pretty sort of gratitude they have shown! It makes my blood boil to think of the return they have made for all the time, the trouble, the money he has spent in trying to do them good. Pshaw! it's no use working myself into a passion; I am glad we are going; I am sick of living in an atmosphere of deception, of being compelled to suspect that every other fellow you meet is only watching for a good opportunity to knock you on the head or to destroy your property. I haven't temper for such a state of existence; I should, for a certainty, be doing some of them a mischief if we staid here, so it's better we are going. What pretty eyes Helen Fortescue has—she is very like her brothers—brothers! Ah, it came naturally—poor dear Fan!'

The tears started to the eyes of the big, brave man, as he thought of his lost friend. Ah! Archie Kindly, Archie Kindly, for a fellow of such gigantic proportions, with such strong bones, and such hard muscles, you have a very soft heart.

Mr. Kindly was scarcely surprised or annoyed at the proof of Father Maguire's double-dealing. He had long known of his hostility towards himself, and had distrusted his professions of good-will; but he was greatly annoyed at the discovery of Donovan's treachery, for though he had suspected him, he would scarcely own it even to himself. 'He of all men to turn against him, he whom he had trusted beyond all others, a man of more education than the general run; a shrewd, clever, civil-spoken fellow; always so respectful in his manner, so grateful for acts of kindness—he to turn against him!'

'Ah!' said Archie, 'he was too civil by half, sir—a sneaking, fawning, shuffling cur—never looked one fairly in the face. I never could bear the fellow.'

'No, and that is one reason, Archie, why I didn't believe half you said against him—I thought you prejudiced.'

'I wish it had been only prejudice, sir, but . . .'

'I wish so, too, with all my heart! So attentive and considerate as your mother and sisters have been to him and his family in cases of sickness, or anything. Well, well, it is useless, nay, sinful, to repine—all is, doubtless, ordered for the best; but that man's treachery has, I own, upset me. One does not like to find that one has been made a fool of, either,' continued Mr. Kindly, after a short pause, and a few turns up and down the room. 'During the whole of these disturbances I have trusted and confided in Donovan; nay, have frequently consulted him as to the best means of putting a stop to them, and the fellow must have been laughing at me in his sleeve all the while; and, instead of aiding to catch the sheep-killing rascals, he enabled them to get out of the way, by giving them information of any extra activity on our part, of which I had, most probably, told him myself—What a precious dupe I have been!'

'You will not overlook this shameful conduct of Donovan's I hope, sir?'

'No, Archie, certainly not; it would be unfair towards those who come after us—I shall immediately give him notice to leave his farm at Michaelmas.'

'And tell him why, I hope, sir.'

'Certainly—I could not in common justice towards the new proprietor of Ballyblunder, whoever he may be, leave a man like Donovan on the estate, to work him the mischief he has worked me. I have already given Moony and Gallagher notice to leave their holdings—they are known offenders. I am sorry to see Higgins's name down here, though not much surprised, for I have suspected him for some time.'

'I have no more patience with him, sir, than with Donovan. He has always been treated with the greatest kindness and consideration, ever since he married our old nurse, Biddy Doyle—poor Biddy! What a nice girl she was, and how fond my sisters were of her, and she of them. I expect she has a hard time of it with her vagabond husband.'

'He used to be a well-conducted man enough,' said Mr. Kindly, 'but evil advisers have been his ruin, as they have been the ruin of many about him; they have a deal to answer for, those same evil advisers.'

Archie whistled, but said nothing; he could not trust himself to speak upon that subject.

'There are others whom I suspect, some more, some less,' continued Mr. Kindly; 'but I shall not meddle with them at present; it is a severe measure to turn a man out of house and home, and I will not do so on suspicion only, however strong it may be. This list' (touching the paper Archie had given him) 'is conclusive evidence to my mind of Donovan's complicity with the late outrages, because it is in direct variance with the man's own words. It was only yesterday that he tried to persuade me that there was no truth in the report that the two Malonys and Robert Doyle were implicated in the sheep-killing, and this paper, which is in his handwriting, bears date a month back; and in the list of 'boys to be cared for and rewarded according to their work,' are the very men whom he told me yesterday were wrongfully suspected. It is a sad state of things when the tenant is set against his landlord, and made to believe that he is a tyrant, and an oppressor, and in short, his natural enemy. They will have a great deal to answer for who have done this.'

'Unfortunately they will not be made to answer for it in this world, sir. A Roman Catholic priest may do what he pleases in this land of liberty of ours.'

'Too true, Archie, he may indeed, and they know it well, and take advantage of the immunity allowed them; but after all, they only act as we should probably act under their circumstances.'

'As we should act, sir? You and I, do you mean?'

'Yes, you or I, or any one with the same opportunities of doing evil with impunity.'

'Not the same sort of evil, sir, I think. I cannot exactly fancy either you or I taking to 'evil speaking, lying, and slandering,' under any circumstances.'

'You and I have been brought up to think such things wrong, mean, contemptible, utterly inexcusable upon any plea whatsoever; but had we been taught to consider that under peculiar circumstances they were allowable, nay, justifiable, how do you know we should not do the like?'

'If we really, *conscientiously* believed such things to be right, I suppose we should practise them; but I confess that I don't think any one above the mental capacity of an idiot *can* think so.'

'You have not much experience in these matters, Archie, or you would know that 'common sense and reason' have very little to do with the matter. A strict and zealous Roman Catholic priest is as much under orders as you are in your regiment, and like you, he obeys the orders he receives without questioning them.'

'Do you really suppose, sir, that Father Maguire imagined he was doing right in setting your tenants against you—in misrepresenting all you say, in thwarting all your efforts for the people's good?'

'Yes, I do; for in acting thus, he does but, I believe, obey the orders of his superiors, which I have not the slightest doubt are: 'Get rid of Mr. Kindly,—quietly if you can—but at all events, get rid of him.' I am in their way; I thwart them, and therefore they thwart me.'

'How do you thwart them?—meaning the priests, I suppose, sir?'

'By my attempts to educate and civilize the people. The Roman Catholic Church is, I am sorry to say, a foe to progress,—she always has been from time immemorial. Her one aim and object is dominion—dominion temporal as well as spiritual. To effect this, she teaches her followers to rely on her for every thing—on themselves for nothing. Knowledge—wisdom—learning—are necessary for the priest alone; the people need them not; why then trouble their heads about such things? It is an easy, comfortable doctrine for a lazy people, but as ruinous as easy—ruinous to the individual; ruinous to a nation.'

'I understand you, sir; by educating the people, by teaching them to rely more on their own exertions, to cultivate their soil and their minds, you give them knowledge, and 'knowledge is power.' I see now how it is you thwart the priests.'

'Precisely so, Archie. 'Knowledge is power,' and 'power' is exactly the very thing which the Roman Catholic Church dislikes to share. One of the charges brought against me by Father Maguire is, that I have weakened his influence with the people. I dare say I have; it is the natural consequence of opening their eyes even to the small extent that I have been enabled to do. The Irish are a quick-witted, clever race, and the effect of education must be to show them the debasing, lowering state of vassalage in which they are kept by their priest; this discovery, of course, weakens his influence with them; but it is an evil influence, carried to the extent to which it is carried, and I cannot conscientiously say that I regret having diminished it.'

'Poor Ireland!' said Archie, 'there seems to be no use in trying to do her good.'

'Do not say that, Archie,' replied his father, laying his hand affectionately on his son's shoulder; 'there is every use in trying to benefit those around us. It is our duty, our bounden duty, to do all the good we can to our fellow-creatures. Because our efforts are not so immediately, or so abundantly, beneficial as we could wish, still we must not say, 'There is no use in trying to do good.' . . . Well, Kate, my love, are you looking for Archie?'

'Yes, papa, we want him to come on the loch; it is such a lovely afternoon. Will you and mama come too? Oh! I wish you would!'

Mr. Kindly kissed his daughter; but he smiled sadly. Oh! how like to his lost one she looked! Few knew—none indeed but his wife, who was acquainted with his most secret thoughts—how dearly he had loved, and how deeply he had mourned, the loss of Baby.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### KIT KELLY REFUSES TO SING, BUT GIVES A SENTIMENT.

AT the boat-house they found Kit Kelly, Pat Purdy, and Jim Horrigan, helping Findon to get the boat ready. Noodle was standing by, looking on solemnly and vacantly at their proceedings; and Monk was watching the 'Innocent' with far more solemnity, but with equal intelligence.

'By-the-bye,' said Mr. Kindly, 'Kelly and Purdy have asked leave to accompany us to Meadowbank; and, as they are both old and faithful servants, I have promised to take them.'

'I am glad of it, sir,' said Archie; 'and Noodle?'

'Poor boy! we must take him too; he would be lost amongst strangers; and there is no saying how they would treat him either.'

'We shall be ready for you directly,' said Findon. 'The boat was half full of water, and that idle fellow, Noodle, won't work.'

'Noodle's a fool,' replied the 'Innocent,' sententiously.

'But he always does what he's told to do,' said Archie, good-humouredly. 'Here, Noodle, bear a hand, and we'll have her as dry as a dust-hole in no time.' So saying he stripped off his coat and set to work with his usual impetuosity.

Noodle immediately followed suit, observing with a dignified shake of the head, 'Noodle always does what Capt'in Archie and Monk tells him.'

'It is astonishing the affection that poor boy has for Archie and his dog. I declare I don't know which he likes best,' said Mr. Kindly.

'I asked him once,' said Kate, 'what he meant by Monk's telling him to do this and that: 'A dog cannot speak, Noodle?' I said. 'Monk spakes to Noodle wid his eyes, an' Noodle know what he says quite well,' he replied; and really I think he does, for they certainly understand each other thoroughly.'

The boat was now declared fit for use. Cloaks and shawls were arranged, and Kate, and Mrs. Kindly, who had joined the party, took their seats; the gentlemen were about to follow, when voices were heard in the direction of the house. 'Stop—stop—hold hard!' was distinctly audible.

'If that is not the roar of a Rut, I am no judge of music,' said Archie, with evident vexation. 'Shall I shove off a few yards, just out of jumping distance? you know, sir, it will be safer.'

'Nonsense, Archie,' replied Mr. Kindly, smiling at his distress; 'hold on! there are several persons coming, I think!'

'So there are! one—two—three!—'there's luck in odd numbers says Rory O'More;' so perhaps James Rut may be struck dumb for the day, or—no! by all that's misfortunate, there's another, and the sapient saying of Roderick O'More meets not our case—we are doomed. In the meantime, mama, will you please to alight; or do you intend to sit there and be scalped (figuratively) by the cruel tomahawk (alias tongue) of the great war-chief, He-haw-jaw-jaw, or the Wild Ass of the Prairies,—in the vulgate, James Rut. Now, to my mind . . .'

'Archie, be quiet!' laughed Mrs. Kindly; 'I am not going to leave the boat,—why should I? Kate, sit still—hush, Archie! they are close by; who are they all?'

'Archie, get the other boat ready,' called out Mr. Kindly as he hastened to meet the fresh arrivals, who now made their appearance, and proved to be Lady O'Neal, Mrs. Burke, Major O'Grady, and James Rut.

'Thank goodness-gracious, and all expletives! the Lady of the Lake is one of them, and we may defy the Rut and all his works,' observed Archie, as he hastened to obey his father's bidding.

James Rut arrived first,—hot and panting. 'All right!' he bawled out from the distance, 'I thought we should find you here—come along, aunt.'

Lady O'Neal strode majestically down the path, disdaining all support, Mrs. Burke followed, clinging with fond tenacity to the Major's stout arm.

'They told us at the house that you had gone on the loch, my dears, and so I thought we would join you; I haven't been in a boat for a week, and then James Rut nearly upset me; but perhaps you would rather we kept away, if so, say the word. Come Kate! honestly now, ar'n't you sorry to see us?'

'No, dear Lady O'Neal; on the contrary, I am very glad to see you, I always am, and . . .'

'There that will do, my dear; I believe every word you have said as yet, so don't say any more; it's a great matter to know when to stop talking; I wish I did, but no Rut ever learnt the art of silence. So we are to go with you, are we?'

'By all means, and delighted we are to have you,' was Mrs. Kindly's polite and truthful reply.

Mrs. Burke, in the mean time, was dancing up and down on her toes, and attitudinizing about, for the benefit of no one in particular.

But a fresh arrangement must be made. This was soon effected. Lady O'Neal took Mrs. Kindly's place by the side of Kate, and Mrs. Kindly joined Mrs. Burke in the other boat. And now arose a series of the most brilliant manœuvres on the part of Mrs. Burke, to secure the presence of the Major, he, poor man, struggling hard, but vainly, against his fate. 'I'll have to marry that woman as sure as my name's O'Grady,' he whispered to Archie as he stepped into his place, followed by Mr. Kindly; the three young men were thus left to escort Lady O'Neal and Kate.

'Come, Kit, shove off, and in with you,' said Archie; 'and, Pat, you jump into the other boat: the Major is not much of an oar at any time, even when his attention is not otherwise engaged, as it is at present,' he whispered Lady O'Neal.

Noodle, who had surveyed the proceedings with apparent indifference, now approached to help Kit to shove the boat of. This was speedily accomplished, and as Kit clambered over the side, Noodle clambered over the stern, followed, as a matter of course, by Monk.

'Hullo! what now?' said Archie.

'Noodle an' Monk is going to say,' replied the 'Innocent,' as he stalked forward and ensconced himself in the bows.

'So I perceive, but you come on board in rather a piratical fashion, Master Noodle. Down, Monk, how dare you, sir!'

For Monk had remained aft with his master, and was offering to shake hands with Lady O'Neal, placing his heavy paw upon her dress, and snoring solemnly in her face: 'Don't mind him, Archie; Monk and I are old friends; good dog! what large loving eyes he has; I declare, I think dogs know what you say. Archie, will you give Monk to me before you go?—I shall want something to remind me of you all.'

Archie shook his head, 'I can't part with Monk, Lady O'Neal.'

'Of course not,—I should despise you if you could, and I shall want nothing to remind me of the Kindlys of Ballyblunder. Kit, do you go with the exiled family, or do you remain behind to take care of Father Hogan?'

'Faix! Kit 'ull go wid the Masther, me Leedy, let alone the Misthress and Miss Kate, an' the Capt'in; —musha! what 'ud the Capt'in do widout Kit to clane the boat an' mind the fushin' tackle?'

'Is there a loch at Meadowbank then?' asked Lady O'Neal.

'Yes, I fancy so,—a sort of a pond I expect,' replied Archie contemptuously.

'I am so glad you are going with us, Kit; I was afraid nothing would move you from Loch Croogh,' said Kate.

'Goin' wid ye, Miss Kate! why wouldn't I?—I as have knowed ye iver since ye war borned, an' afore too —that is, I knowed the Misthress afore ye war borned, which is all one;—do yees remimber, Miss Kate, the first time iver I sin ye?'

'No, indeed, Kit, for you must have seen me long before I could remember anything.'

'Well—well! only think of that now! You war out a walkin',—that is Biddy Doyle, she as married Tim Higgins (wus luck) had yees in her arrums, for you war bud a month or two old, an' had not thin inquired the use av your feet, an'—sez I—'Biddy, let us have a look at the babby'—an' she widdrew an illigant imbordered curtin from before your face—an' shure enough you smiled up at me, an' more be token, as I stooped to examine your f'atures, you caught a hoult av me hair wid your little hand, an' you pulled it sthrong, so you did—do you not remimber that now, Miss Kate?'

'No, indeed,' said Kate, laughing heartily; 'what a rude little baby I must have been.'

'I remimber it thin, an' the throuble Biddy had to loose your hand, God bless it—faix! it's yerself had the best right to pull ivery hair out av me head—why not? Asy, Masther Archie—asy, Capt'in, or we'll be aboard the other boat.'

'I want to speak her Commander, Kit.'

They pulled alongside, and a general conversation ensued: Mrs. Burke declared that the boat had rolled terribly; that she had been very much frightened, and had frequently been obliged to catch hold of Major O'Grady's arm.

'Faith, it's true for her she did, and I'm 'a gone coon,' Archie,' he whispered.

After awhile the boats again separated, and pulled in different directions about the loch, to be reunited as the sun went down, when the party disembarked, and proceeded to the house, to partake of a 'severe tea.'

'Lady O'Neal,' said Archie, in a low tone, 'expound unto me, if you please, the why and the wherefore of James Rut's taciturnity and quiescence; he scarcely spoke a word in the boat, and at this moment he sits and stares in silent bewilderment, as though he saw a ghost.'

Lady O'Neal laughed. 'He sees the ghost of a departing spirit, my dear; it has haunted and tormented him for a long, long time, and now it is on the eve of departure, and it makes him sad, poor boy.'

'I don't understand you, Lady O'Neal, you speak in parables.'

'Do you know, Archie, I have often remarked that far and clear-sighted folk are often blind to objects under their very noses.'

'Expound, expound! an' it please your ladyship; what is this 'departing spirit' which haunts the disconsolate James?'

'The spirit of love, you dull boy! Because you all knew that Kate was never likely to be captivated by James Rut, you overlooked the probability of his falling in love with her.'

'James Rut in love with Kate!'

'Even so, my dear; is there anything so very extraordinary in the idea?'

'No; but it is very extraordinary that none of us should have discovered it.'

'By no means, I have told you why you did not: and besides, James never openly showed his feelings till Mr. Findon came, when jealousy forced the truth plainly enough into his eyes; and this you might all have seen, if you had not been too much, and too painfully occupied with your own affairs, poor creatures!'

'Does Kate know it?'

'Of course she does, my dear, but not till lately. Now, Archie, you mus'n't tease poor James about this.'

'Not I, indeed, Lady O'Neal; I respect and like him better than I ever did before, poor fellow! I can readily imagine his distress at the thought of her going away, though she never would have married him, I am certain, had there been no such person as Findon Fortescue in existence.'

'I know that well enough, child; but it makes it none the easier for him to bear. And now, I will give you another piece of news, Archie; the Major is caught.'

'You are not in earnest!' cried Archie, opening his eyes wide with wonder.

'Quite; you men are blind as beetles in these matters.'

'Well, he has often said to me, 'I'll have to marry that woman yet, or I'm done for, Archie,' but I always thought he was joking.'

'Faith, it's past a joke, my dear, now, at all events; he told me himself, this morning, that he had put the fatal question.'

'To which, of course, there could be but one answer?' suggested Archie.

'He was graciously accepted. 'Sure, I could not help myself,' he said to me; 'go where I would, the Widow Burke was always at my heels; her attentions were so marked, and so public, I'd lose my character if I didn't marry her, and make an honest man of myself,' and he laughed, and seemed very pleased.'

'Well, I hope he'll be happy, but I doubt it; she will bother him to death, I am afraid, with her airs and graces; she would me, I know.'

'Oh, they'll be happy enough, never fear; Mrs. Burke has a kind heart, and the Major is good-nature itself. Besides, she will drop all her nonsense now.'

'I hope so, for I like the Major, and I don't think much of . . .'

'Be quiet, Archie! there is no necessity that you *should* think much of her; but I tell you, she will make him a good wife.'

Archie did not look convinced, but wisely held his tongue.

At this moment Kit Kelly opened the door, heralding his approach with the usual 'Av you plaze . . .' But he got no further, for Lady O'Neal cut him short with 'Kit, come here! Mr. Kindly, I am taking a great liberty, but I want to give my friend Kit a glass of whiskey,—may I?'

'Dear Lady O'Neal, do not talk of taking liberties in this house, pray;—all it contains is at your disposal,' was the polite reply.

'Thank you,—an Arab sheik could not say more,' laughed her ladyship. 'Pour out a glass of whiskey, Archie, there's a good boy! Now, Kit, drink our healths, and give us a song or a sentiment,—I don't care which!'

'Och, murdther, me leedy! shure I niver sung a song in me life; I'm as onconshis av the art of harminy, me leedy, as a cow is av a side-pocket, beggin' your honour's pardin for the wulgarity av the obsewashin.'

'Kit, I liked the story you told us in the boat of your first interview with Miss Kate; you don't seem to bear malice for the pull she gave your whiskers.'

'Is it I bear malidge to Miss Kate? May I niver! bud the consate of that, fairly upsets me manners!' and he slapped his legs and laughed till he cried.— 'Ah, thin, leedies an' gintlemen, I asks your pardins for misbehaving meself this a-way, bud to think av me bearing malidge to Miss Kate! Och, by this an' by that, but it war jokin' ye war, me leedy!'

'Now, Kit, take your whiskey,' said Mr. Kindly. Kit and I were boys together,' he continued, 'and a kinder or more faithful fellow there is not in all Ireland!'

'Ah, boderashin to 'kind and faithful!' shure I niver done more nor me duty, av I've done that same.'

Kit wiped his eyes with the cuff of his coat,—his master's praise nearly upset him: hastily seizing the glass of whiskey from Archie's hand, he said,—

'Here's healths round, leedies an' gintlemen!'

'Stop, Kit!' cried Lady O'Neal, 'a song or a sentiment,—I must have one or the other!'

'Faix! your leedyship, I niver singed a song in me life, me leedy, an' as for a sintiment, bad look to the one I remimbers.'

'Come, come, Kit,' said Archie, 'don't be bashful.'

'Ah thin,' said Kit in despair, as he lifted the glass to his lips, '*Here's may ye niver come back the way ye* *wint!*' and he tossed off the whiskey, and hurried out of the room.

'I say, Archie, what do you think of that?' laughed the Major.

'It serves us right for teasing good old Kit. James, order the car,' said Lady O'Neal; 'it's time we went back the way *we* came, at any rate,' added her ladyship facetiously.

# CHAPTER XXVI.

## FAREWELL TO BALLYBLUNDER.

DO you know what it is to leave 'home' for ever?—To tear yourself from the spot where you were born and bred—the scenes of your babyhood and earliest years;—those loved scenes, where as girl or boy you laughed and played—as man or woman you wept and smiled:—where joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, care and trouble, hope and fear, were shared by those loved best;—where each tree was a remembrance, each shrub a memory? Do you know what it is to leave a home like this for ever?

Then will you understand the feelings of Kate and Archie, as, for the last time, they walked round the grounds of Ballyblunder, on the morning of their departure. They were alone,—even Findon must not share this last walk.

The dew lay thick upon the grass as the brother and sister left the house; the morning was bright and beautiful as a dream,—'calm as a child's repose.'

Tears were streaming down Kate's cheek as she turned to meet the first rays of the sun, now bursting over the top of Slaughmacuish.

'Don't cry, Kate,' said Archie, his own lip trembling as he spoke, 'sunshine and tears do not blend well together.'

'Sunshine and rain often come together, Archie.'

'Yes, but not without a bow in the heavens, as an emblem of the hope of better days.'

'You are right, Archie,' replied Kate, smiling through her tears.

'Ah, there is the bow I was speaking of! You have no idea how that smile lights up your countenance, dearest Kate.'

'I do, indeed, look for brighter days, Archie; but I cannot, cannot help crying to-day,—do not try to prevent me, it does me good.'

They walked on in silence for several minutes. A small bird flew out of a cedar tree as they passed.

'Oh, Archie! there is my little golden-crested wren; look! she is going back again, she knows we are friends.'

'There has been a golden crester's nest in that old cedar as long as I can remember,' said Archie.

'Yes, and a wood-pigeon's in the clump of yews; and a robin's under the filbert trees; and fifty more nests in different places that I know of. Oh, Archie! is this *really* the last time we shall walk along this path?'

He made no reply, save by pressing her arm closer to his side.

They stood by Loch Croogh,—not a breath ruffled its glassy surface; rocks and trees and mountain tops were reflected with soft distinctness upon its calm and placid bosom. Never had the lake seemed so beautiful in their eyes.

'I almost wish the day was wet and stormy; I could leave the place with less regret, I think.'

Kate shook her head. 'No, no, Archie, I would not have missed this lovely morning, and this last ramble, for worlds. It makes me very sad, I own, but the recollection of this walk, laden with memories of pleasure and of deep undying sorrow, will never leave me. Come, Archie!'

She stept into the boat, Archie following; he pulled slowly out into the centre of the loch,—there he lay on his oars,—and the brother and sister looked around on all the well-known objects, familiar to them from infancy!

Each bluff—each point—each jutting rock—and each receding bay, how well they knew, and how dearly they loved them all!

They now approached Ballacroogh. There was the dear old 'banqueting oak'—there the spot where Baby sketched and Fanshawe lingered:—poor Kate! the sweet yet sorrowful remembrances, which were so forcibly awakened, completely overcame her; she buried her face in her hands and sobbed as if her heart would break.

Archie's face was pale, and his lips firmly compressed; but he could not, strive as he would, keep back the rising tears. He put his arm round Kate, and drew her towards him, but he did not speak.

At length her violent burst of grief subsided: she raised her head. 'I shall be calmer now, Archie, I struggled against it as long as I could.'

Archie pressed her hand affectionately. 'Are you equal to it?' he whispered.

'Yes,' she replied firmly, 'better able now than I was before—let us go at once: you need not fear me, Archie, I shall not give way again; I have shed the last tear that will fall at Ballyblunder.'

Her brother still hesitated; her agony of grief had alarmed him. 'Are you sure, dearest Kate?' he said, 'the coming trial is far more severe than this which has so fearfully shaken you.'

'I have prayed for strength, and you may trust me.'

Archie pulled rapidly back towards home, and soon the boat entered a small cove, a hundred yards or so from where they had embarked.

It was a gloomy and secluded spot, overshadowed by the branches of two yew trees of fabulous age; their trunks were mere shells, but their tough and sinewy limbs, heavily laden with thick funereal foliage, stretched over the deep, dark waters of the silent pool.

They landed, and, ascending by a winding path, passed through a small wicket and entered an enclosure, rank with long grass and darkened by the shade of many trees. A grey stone building, half covered with ivy, stood before them; they went round to the opposite side of the time-worn edifice.

A ray of sunshine fell upon a white marble monument—they stood beside Baby's grave!

Kate knelt amidst the bright and beautiful flowers which grew around. Her pale face was calm and composed, her lips moved in prayer, her deep earnest eyes were full of sorrow, but no tear fell; and as Archie gazed in surprise at her self-command, a smile of ineffable sweetness lighted up her lovely countenance. She stooped and kissed the cold damp grave, then rising from her knees, took Archie's arm; and as he led her away, her face wore the hue of the marble against which she had so lately leaned, but still her eyes were tearless—she had kept her word.

Returning to the house, they met Findon and their father on the lawn. 'We have been looking for you,' said Mr. Kindly, 'it is breakfast time.' Kate smiled and kissed him, but did not dare to speak; he asked no questions,—he guessed to what spot their steps had been directed.

* * * *

Breakfast seemed but a mockery, and ere it was over, Kit Kelly looked in, saying, 'Av you plaze, sirr, there's a boy here 'ud spake with your honour.' Mr. Kindly looked up, and there, cowering behind Kit, stood a tall, lathy, beetle-browed fellow, twirling his brimless hat in his hands, and otherwise exhibiting marked signs of a very uneasy state of mind.

'Why, Higgins,' said Mr. Kindly, as soon as he recognized him, 'I little expected to see *you* here today, what do you want with me?'

The man raised his head, but being greatly abashed by his proximity to the 'leedies,' he only pulled his forelock and 'scraped a foot,' but said nothing.

'Come,' resumed Mr. Kindly, 'you have behaved ill to me, and you know it; but if I can do anything for you, tell me what it is: I have helped you before, and perhaps I may again (for your wife's sake); but you don't deserve it.'

'Faix!' said the man suddenly, with the flush of shame on his swarthy countenance, 'I desarve nothin' but ill at your hands, an' I've resaved nothin' but good. I've spoke agin you, an' I've acted agin you; I've destroyed your property, an' you've presarved what's dearer to me nor life itself.' He stopped a moment and his voice faltered; he then spoke again rapidly and eagerly. 'No man is bound to criminate hisself, an' I wunt say what it is I done agin you an' yours; but I war put up to what I done by that black-hearted thief, Donovan, an' by another whose name I durstn't mintion, who ought to have knowed better; but I knowed better meself, and I don't want to load anny other man's showlders wid my sins: an' I've come now to ask your pardin, masther, for the mischief I done you an' yours. I'm mortial ashamed of meself, whin I think of all your kindness to me an' mine, an' I dar sca'ce look you in the face. I can't an' I don't expict you to shake han's wid me as your honour's done wid some of 'the boys,' but jist say, 'Tim Higgins, I forgive ye,' an' I'll go home to Biddy wid a lighter heart than I've had this many a day.'

'I have nothing to forgive you but the sheep-killing, Higgins, have I?' asked Mr. Kindly in a low faltering tone.

'No, no, your honour!—no, no! bad as I am, an' ongrateful as I've bin, I'd have definded that poor gintleman from the murdtherin' Brady wid my life, had I bin to the fore. 'Twas that fust turned me from the bad work, an' thin Miss Kate—God bless her!—finished it. But you can't say you forgive me? Well, well, I don't desarve it.'

Mr. Kindly held out his hand. 'God forbid,' he said, 'that I should refuse my forgiveness to one who repents so sincerely. I cannot tell you how pleased I am to hear you speak as you have done. Keep a clear conscience, Higgins; strive to earn an honest livelihood; and never listen to bad advice from any one.'

Tim Higgins wrung Mr. Kindly's hand hard; the tears coursed down his rugged cheeks; and, in a choking voice he said, 'May the blessin' of the Lord rest on you an' yours, for iver an' iver, amen.' Then, turning to Kate, 'Biddy's dooty to you, Miss Kate, an' she'll pray for you the longest day she has to live. May the heavens be your bed for iver an' iver, amen!' He then abruptly withdrew.

'Poor Higgins,' said Mr. Kindly,—'there is good in him I am sure, he was a steady lad before he got into bad company.'

'Meaning Donovan and Father Hogan, sir?' said Archie. 'Amongst my sins of omission,' he continued, in a dolorous tone, 'there is one that I particularly lament—as a dereliction of my duty.'

'What is the particular dereliction to which you refer, Archie?'

'It is this, sir; that I never thrashed Father Hogan—this weighs heavy on my mind.'

There was no time for Mr. Kindly to rebuke the headstrong youth—the hour of departure had arrived.

The whole family proceeded to the hall door, where the carriage stood in readiness to convey them for the last time from Ballyblunder.

Why does Mr. Kindly stop on the threshold? Why is his face flushed and agitated? . . . The court-yard is full of people;—men, women, and children in their Sunday clothes throng the doorway. The carriage is there; but in place of the four horses, are forty of 'the boys' strongly roped together. 'Boys,' said Mr. Kindly, his voice trembling with emotion, 'I did not expect this!—and though I feel much gratified by this proof of your good-will—I think you had better let the horses do their duty, for it's a heavy load.'

'The divil a fut, yer honour, till we're out of the barony; then let the horses drag an' welcome,' replied one of the team.

'Shure it's the laste we can do for him,' said another.

'An' him as done so much for us,' added a third.

'Faith, an' that's thrue for you, Pat—och, hone! me heart is sore that he should lave us,' cried one of the women.

'Och, hone! och, hone! why will he lave us?' rose on the air from fifty voices. Many of the women fell on their knees and waved their arms wildly as they poured forth their melancholy lament. It was the Irish *Keen*, or funeral lament, which the Kindlys had never heard before, save as a chant for the dead. It sounded to them like a *requiem* over the grave of Baby—they were visibly affected, and took their places in the carriage with sad hearts and trembling lips. It was a touching scene, and one never to be forgotten. Slowly the carriage moved through the gates—slowly it wound along the banks of Loch Croogh—but no word was spoken by its occupants till it arrived at the well-known bend of the road whence the last glimpse of *Home* could be obtained. There the men halted.

'Poor fellows! they knew we should like to have a last look!' said Mr. Kindly.

Never before had their old home, embosomed amidst the dark trees, seemed so beautiful—so dear.

Many a group still lingered before the house—and many a hand waved a last farewell—and again the wild *keen* rose on the air.

Kate sank back utterly overcome. How often with tears and smiles had she waved an adieu,—a temporary adieu,—from that spot, to those she loved best; but now she could neither weep nor smile—for the farewell she had answered was for ever!

'We had better move on, dear William,' whispered Mrs. Kindly.

In a few moments they had turned the corner, and Ballyblunder must henceforth be a memory only,—a recollection—strong, vivid, undying, it is true, but still only a memory.

Again there was a long silence within the carriage, as it was dragged quietly and slowly along, until they reached the boundary of what had so lately been Mr. Kindly's property; here the men stopped, and now all came forward to say, 'Good bye, and God speed you.' These were honest, rough fellows, who lived close round the house of Ballyblunder; many of them were employed by Mr. Kindly on his farm, and their honest natures rebelled against the injustice and ingratitude which drove so good a friend from the county. Many a home-truth was out-spoken at that farewell on the road-side, by the bleak moor; many a blessing was called down upon the heads of the Kindly family, and many a curse launched against 'them as druv the best landlord in the North of Ireland from his house an' home.'

Mr. Kindly thanked them for their good wishes, expressed his sorrow at leaving them, and wound up with a few words of advice as to their conduct towards their new landlord. The horses were put to, and the carriage moved on, conveying sad hearts, and tearful eyes;

when, at a turn in the road, they found several of their friends congregated together, to give a last farewell. 'I did not come to Ballyblunder this morning, my dears,' said Lady O'Neal, 'because I knew you would all be crying, and so I thought it better to give you a little time to dry your eyes; but I could not let you go out of the county without saying once more 'good bye,' you know.'

'Kindly,' said Major O'Grady, 'God speed you! we'll miss you more than you'll miss us, I expect, and good right we have, for you have done more good, and received more evil since you came amongst us, than all the rest of us put together; bad luck to them that drove you forth, say I, be they who they may!' And the Major looked fiercely around, as he shook Mr. Kindly's hand, long and warmly.

James Rut whispered his adieux in a subdued tone. 'My brother and sister would have come,' he said, 'but my aunt would not allow them . . .'

'No, no, my dears,' said Lady O'Neal, 'I was not going to have you all deafened before you started.'

The last farewells were spoken, and the carriage moved on once more, when suddenly a balloon of coloured muslin floated into view: 'Dear me, dear me, I am afraid I am too late,' it said, 'how sorry I am!' and the Widow Burke was fain to content herself by waving a graceful adieu with the whitest of pocket-handkerchiefs.

* * * *

They are gone! Shall we follow them to Meadowbank? To what purpose? What sympathy have we with the Kindlys of Meadowbank? With Major O'Grady we say, 'God speed them!'

One word to the boys of Ballyblunder:

'The next time you get a Mr. Kindly amongst you, . . . . KEEP HIM.'

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